Tracing Memory

A Glossary of Graphic Signs and Symbols in African Art and Culture

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International Centre for African Language,
Literature and Tradition

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CILTADE MISSION STATEMENT

The International Centre for African Language, Literature and Tradition is a non-profit scientific and cultural association which pursues the following objectives:

1. To assist in African development through the dissemination of knowledge and positive experience of African culture in its different forms.
2. To promote the positive and enriching aspects of Africa and its peoples for the benefit of all humanity.
3. To provide cultural and educational information gathered from intensive research such that new avenues for African development will be opened.
4. To put in place the necessary personnel and technical support to ensure not only the dissemination of research results but also, and most significantly, to ensure the integration of this work in Africa's global development.
5. To function as a repository of African tradition for cultural and linguistic data drawn from primary sources.

This book has been produced as a part of CILTADE's "Symbols in African Cultures" programme (SYCA).

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By the Same Author

Books

Énigmes lubas -Nshinga, Étude structurale, éditions de l'Université Lovanium, Kinshasa, 1970.

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Articles/Essays on Symbolism

"L'*homo religiosus* africano e i suoi simboli", in *Trattato di Antropologia del Sacro*, Vol. I, *Le origini e il problema dell'homo religiosus*, (under the supervision of Julien Ries), Jaca Book-Massimo, Milan, 1989, pp.257-279. French translation: "L'*homo religiosus* africain et ses symboles", in *Traité d'anthropologie du sacré*, Desclée, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1992, pp.281-305.

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In Preparation

Les Traces du "Grand signe". Une lecture de symboles initiatiques ohendo (Zaire), in collaboration with Ngonga-ke-Mbembe.

Anthropologie des signes (working title)

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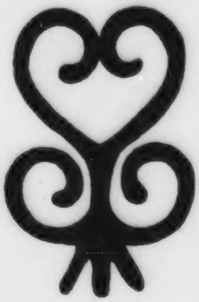
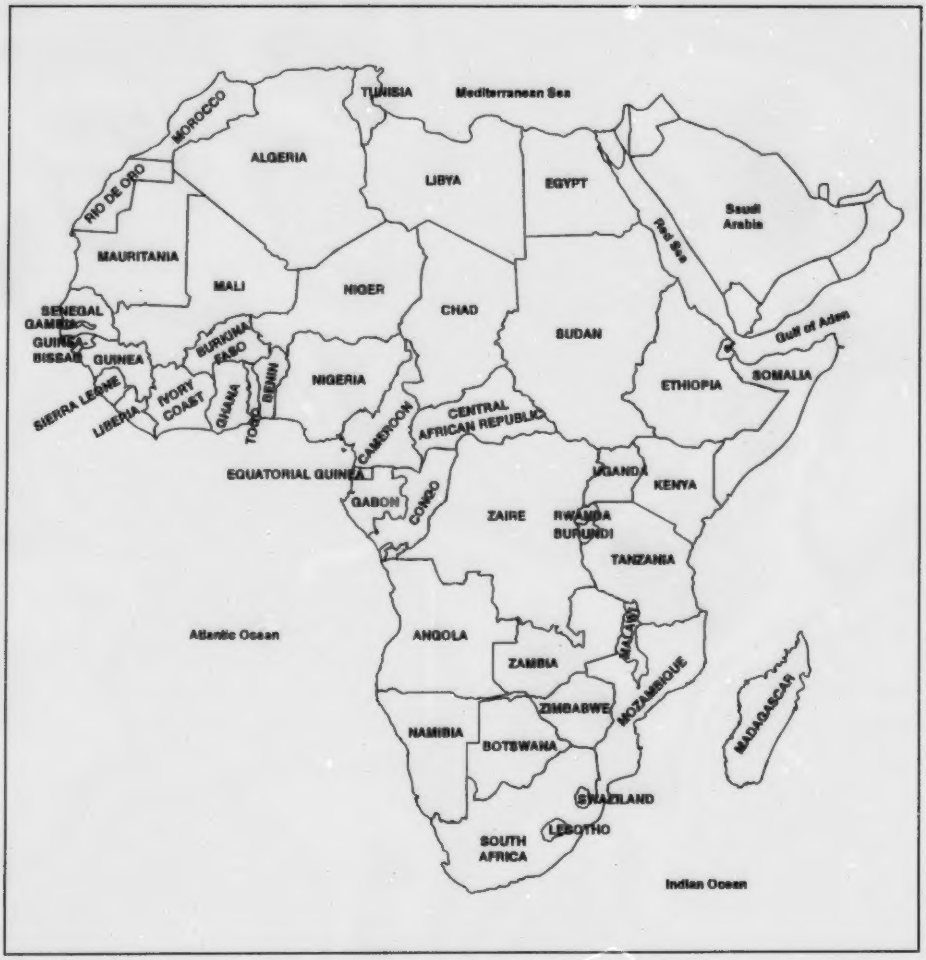
Introduction

A New Perspective on Africa



Quest for knowledge, research


TUNISIA
Mediterranean Sea
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
LIBYA
EGYPT
RIO DE ORO
Red Sea
Saudi Arabia
MAURITANIA
MALI
NIGER
CHAD
SENEGAL
GAMBIA
GUINEA-BISSAU
GUINEA
BURKINA FASO
SUDAN
Gulf of Aden
SOMALIA
ETHIOPIA
SIERRA LEONE
LIBERIA
IVORY COAST
GHANA
TOGO
BENIN
NIGERIA
CAMEROON
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
UGANDA
KENYA
GABON
CONGO
ZAIRE
RWANDA
BURUNDI
TANZANIA
MALAWI
Atlantic Ocean
ANGOLA
ZAMBIA
MOZAMBIQUE
MADAGASCAR
ZIMBABWE
NAMIBIA
BOTSWANA
SWAZILAND
LESOTHO
SOUTH AFRICA
Indian Ocean

Map of Africa

Genesis of the Project

This Glossary is intended as a contribution to the general understanding of signs and symbols and has its origins in the following three observations:

- The numerous current works on signs and symbols have given little attention to African symbolism.
- In spite of the existence of several outstanding works on the subject which date back over the last fifty years, few examples of African symbolism are cited in publications on symbols in general.
- The "ghetto-ization" of Africanist studies has meant that many positive aspects of African culture have remained unknown to the larger public, thereby reinforcing clichés and depriving much of humanity of this continent's rich cultural contribution.

This compilation of African graphic symbols attempts to address these issues by providing the reader with an easily accessible means of gauging the creative force of analogy in thought and perception that these symbols manifest. For the peoples who developed and continue to use these sign-symbols, they represent a gift from God to be used as tools to disclose hidden truths. By way of symbols, messages can be sent and received, passed from the visible world to the invisible.

No one can claim a complete understanding of the human capacity for symbolic thought. However, what knowledge we do have permits a more informed reading of these signs, for example, through the study of objects of worship, the medium which best exemplifies their use.

Intended Audience

This book is intended for anyone interested in signs and symbols regardless of their educational or cultural background. It will hopefully contribute to our knowledge and understanding of African religious objects as well as open new avenues of research in the field of African art. Artists themselves, both African and non-African, may in fact find inspiration in the union of beauty and meaning displayed in these signs. In a similar fashion, those working in the fields of semantics and semiology will be able to draw upon the conceptual fields constituted by the signs which speak of a vision of the world unique to these peoples and of the universal principles that this vision binds together in numerous ways. Finally, this work may also help to promote a new way of looking at Africa, its cultures and its spirituality.

Content and Limitations

As the title suggests, this work is a "glossary" in the sense that it is a systematic inventory of graphic signs and symbols classified by concepts and listed in alphabetical order without a great deal of additional commentary. In fact, my original intention was to furnish as much information as I could for each sign, which would inevitably have led to the creation of a more encyclopedic work. I realized rather quickly, however, that the information I had at my disposal was neither of the same nature nor of the same significance for all signs, and that such an approach would result in an unbalanced presentation of data. I therefore decided from the outset to limit myself to an inventory format which, moreover, allowed me to integrate the signs studied by other researchers which are found in this volume.

As a research tool, this format not only lends itself to the definition of symbolic fields for particular cultures and contexts, but it also provides the general public with an "open book" to which further contributions may be made by

***Mukishi wa pwo* Mask (Chokwe)**

Chokwe populations occupy a territory covering parts of Angola, Zaire and Zambia. *Mukishi wa pwo*, a mask depicting a woman's face, exalts the beauty of a woman and the blossoming of her femininity. It represents the mythic mother, the woman-spirit — dispenser of beauty and fertility of which she is the source. It is worn by a professional male dancer during certain ritual dances related to fertility. Woman do not use this mask as it is through men that women receive their fertility. The scored circles are Chokwe clan signs which symbolize welcome and integration within a group.

anyone wishing to do so. In this way, the symbolism of the signs can retain its living nature and be enriched by new connotations drawn from new situations.

Resulting from research conducted at CILTADE[1] or from the work of other researchers, the sign-symbols assembled in this compilation have an essentially initiatory function. They are studied in structured social environments where students are initiated in the deciphering and use of signs according to each student's particular field of activity, e.g. divination, hunting, agriculture, professional activities as well as diverse ritual practices. In this respect, most of the signs possess a certain esoteric character which, without necessarily making them "forbidden" or "secret", are nonetheless involved in an individual's initiation and appropriate education. However, the ability to decipher a Serer symbol, for example, does not automatically follow from membership in this group nor from having simply lived with these people; the knowledge of signs is neither innate nor acquired by mere association, but rather the result of a long and patient apprenticeship.

Finally, the reader should not be surprised to find contradictory meanings listed under one entry. The seeming versatility and ambivalence of certain symbols stem from their lack of context — a sign only conveys its message when used in a very precise manner.

Phumbu Warrior Mask (Baphende, Zaire)

One of the masks which play a role in initiation for the Baphende of the Kwango region. The *phumbu* warrior mask is categorized with the *mbuya* (sacred masks) which are considered as "the ancestral support of supernatural forces" and as the spirits of the dead returning to the world of the living to take part in the organization of society. The mask features pointed horns evoking the aggressive nature of the warrior whereas the chin is extended by a black goatee, sign of the maturity conferred by age which this function requires. The forehead is marked by the sign called "bearer of light", symbol of fertility and blood (Glossary: F9). The *phumbu* mask represents the defence of power and the established order (Mudiji, 1989).

---

[1] International Centre for African Language, Literature and Tradition

Reproduced Works

This book would probably have never seen the light of day, at least in its present form, without the authorization to reproduce certain works. Many of the signs found in the Glossary come from the work of the following authors: Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen, *Signes graphiques soudanais* (1951); Geneviève Calame-Griaule, *Ethnologie et langage. La parole chez les Dogon*, (1965, 1987); Germaine Dieterlen and Youssouf Cissé, *Les fondements de la société d'initiation du Komo* (1972); Youssouf Cissé, "Signes graphiques, représentations, concepts et tests relatifs à la personne chez les Malinke et les Bambara du Mali" (1973); Philippe Jespers, "Signes graphiques minyanka" (1979) et *La croyance religieuse des Minyanka du Mali* (1992). Finally, my colleague Ngonga-Ke-Mbembe, with whom I have studied Ohendo initiatory signs, agreed to the inclusion of these signs in the Glossary.

Acknowledgements

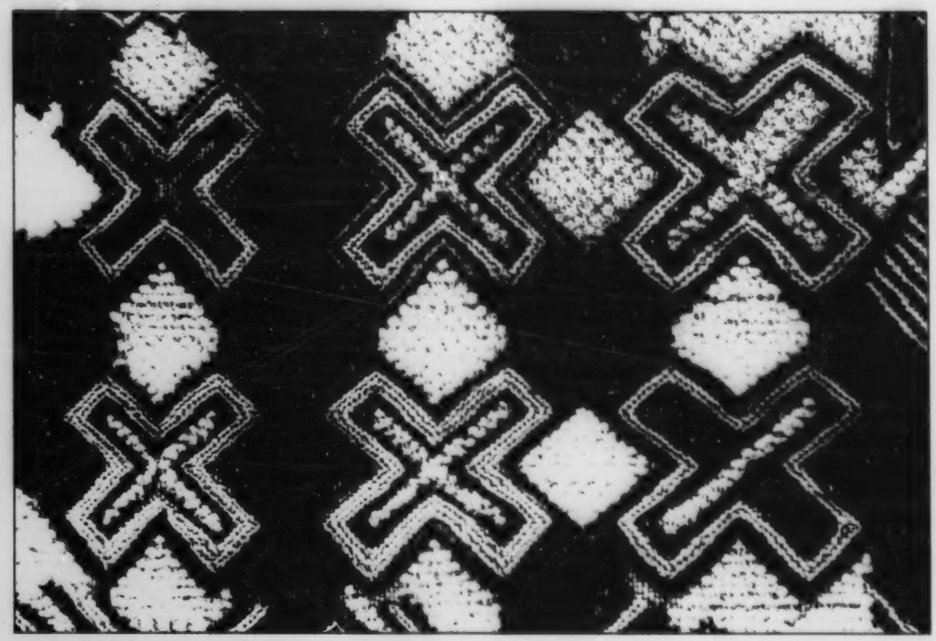
I would like to take the opportunity to express my deep gratitude to all the aforementioned authors for the permission to use the results of their work in this volume.

In addition, Geneviève Calame-Griaule and Youssouf Cissé agreed to review the entries pertaining to their work and make any necessary corrections. They also made useful suggestions for the project as a whole. The collaboration of Geneviève Calame-Griaule proved to be even more valuable in that she agreed to describe and comment on the Dogon objects found herein.

Throughout the preparation of this book, I was supported by many other people whose understanding and friendship were evidenced by their concrete actions and sometimes by less conspicuous "signs".

This book owes its beauty to the talents and care of several artists. The drawings are the work of Axelle and Gaëtan Faïk, the photographs of objects from private collections were taken by Bruno Maiter and those of objects from the collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization by Richard Garner. The Table of Signs was produced by Chantal Seffer. Eric Tempels meticulously reread the different versions of the manuscript and the final version benefitted from Bruno Maiter's rigorous critique — their judicious suggestions were an invaluable help.

I would also like to thank David Hamilton for ensuring the English translation of the Glossary and all those who contributed translations, namely, Lusia Chimechero, Jennifer Nancy Brown, Véronique Bragard, Sue Black, and Jean-Pierre and Isabel Lemaître. Finally, I wish to extend my gratitude to the Canadian Museum of Civilization which, through the interest of Carmelle Bégin, Chief Curator and Jean-François Blanchette, Chief of Publishing, has welcomed this work as part of its Mercury Series.



Crossroads (Glossary: C 47)

As a final remark, I would like to point out that this Glossary represents only the beginning of what will undoubtedly be an unending process as long as there are signs to be deciphered and as long as symbolic and conceptual fields remain very much alive and tied to the evolution of thought and to the changing contexts in which signs are used. My sole purpose has been to create a basic reference tool, founded on the work of those who came before me and the research currently being conducted by members of CILTADE in the field of African symbolism, for anyone who may be interested in this subject.

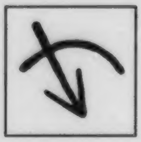
Using the Glossary

The Glossary itself comprises six hundred and fifty graphic signs divided into alphabetically ordered sections. Each section represents a given "symbolic field" and is identified by a keyword :

1. The keywords are printed in bold typeface. They are not numbered.
2. When a keyword conveys a notion covering a wide symbolic field, words designating other realities pertaining to this field follow the keyword immediately, in a type of "sub-concept" entry.
3. The numbered entries provide definitions of the corresponding signs which share (with varying proximity) the core symbolism expressed by each keyword.
4. An arrow [➤] is used to cross-reference an analogy or close association of meaning:
    - between symbols (when placed within a numbered entry)

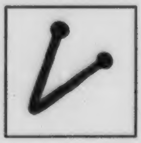
Abundance

Abundance, increase, development, multiplication.



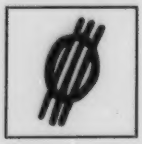
1 Multiplication, increase, development (of society). The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972 : p. 125, No. 77].

**Union.*



2 Abundance. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972 : p. 127, No. 83].

**Both your hands*



3 Abundance. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972 : p. 190, No. 3].

**Water laden with vital forces*

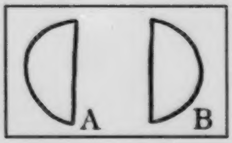
➤ CIRCLE ➤ QUANTITY.

- between symbolic fields (when placed at the end of a the numbered entries for a given keyword)

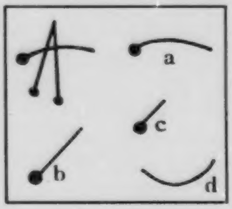
Cross-referenced words are always capitalized.

5. Certain concepts may be represented by several signs.

6. Variations of a sign which are considered in their culture of origin to have the same symbolic value are identified here by the same number, and, if necessary for clarification, by an accompanying capital letter.



7. Certain signs can be analyzed into their component elements which retain the same meaning as they would have as autonomous signs in other circumstances. In this instance, only the principal sign is numbered, with the elements being identified by lower case letters.



8. When the symbolic meanings of a given sign are noted under separate entries, these are cross-referenced accordingly.

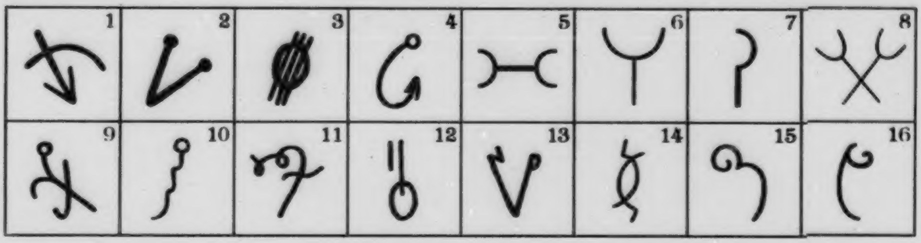
9. The names of the signs are given in italics with an asterisk indicating that this designation will be found in its language of origin in the Table of Names. Sometimes a sign does not bear a name *per se* but rather is identified by the thought or proverb it evokes. It is the latter which is provided here.

   (Certain signs have been given designations in French only and hence, do not appear in the Table of Names. In such cases, the name appears at the end of the Glossary entry in italics but without an asterisk. ed.*)*

The Table of Signs

In order to make it easier to consult the Glossary using the signs themselves as the point of reference, the Table of Signs includes a schematic representation of all signs with the letter (referring to the section) and number by which they have been classified.

A



The Table of Names

Rather than overloading the body of the Glossary, the following information has been appended as a table (from left to right):

1. The Glossary reference number (n.b. The organization of the table reflects the alphabetical order of the Glossary sections.).
2. The known names of the graphic signs in their African language of origin.
3. The name of the language of origin.
4. The designated meaning of the name and/or the expression/proverb associated with the sign.

A

No.	Name	Language of Origin	Designated Meaning
1	*dyèè*	Bambara	Union
2	*í bóló fla*	Bambara	Both your hands
3	*nyama dyí*	Bambara	Water laden with vital forces

All the entries provided in this table do not necessarily appear in the text of the Glossary. Where one sign is known to have designations in several languages, it was considered preferable to list additional designations only in the Table of Names (once again, to avoid overloading the Glossary). In such a case, an asterisk appears in the body of the Glossary entry directing the reader to the additional information provided in the table.

The Index of Symbolic Fields

The Index lists both keywords and the words constituting the "other realities" subsumed by the key word. These are listed together in alphabetical order with keywords in bold type. The arrow [➤] cross-references words to their associated keyword.

Absurdity ➤ Disorder, Madness
ABUNDANCE
Accomplishes woman ➤ Initiation
Accomplishment ➤ Initiation
Accord ➤ Agreement, Alliance, Commitment
Active forces (masculine) ➤ Energies
ACTIVITY

Featured Artifacts

Although this is not intended as a book on art, I thought it wise to include illustrations of religious objects as well as objects of everyday use which represent exceptional examples of many of the signs presented in the Glossary.

The objects featured here come from private collections and the collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Those from private collections represent examples of the cultural heritage of the Bushong people from the Kasai region of Zaire. They feature abstract signs and have been chosen solely to illustrate their material use without sociocultural commentary.

The objects belonging to the collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization are accompanied by a brief commentary which places them in their social context or describes their socio-religious function.

Certain objects provide examples of more complex combinations of signs such as the Dogon objects (pp. 54, 80, 101) analyzed by Geneviève Calame-Griaule.

Unpublished Sources and Bibliography

The unpublished sources referred to here are the research and results of field work done by CILTADE members. This work is kept at the Centre under the title "CILTADE Research and Archives" and catalogued according to the nature of the material:

I. Arts [ARTS]
II. Linguistics [LING]
III. Oral Literature [LITOR]
IV. Signs & Symbols [SYCA]
V. Traditions [TRAD]
VI. Iconography [ICON]
VII. Sound Recordings [SON]

The analysis of primary source data constitutes a priority for the Centre — there are approximately five hundred graphic signs currently catalogued under "Arts" and "Signs and Symbols" drawn from Central African cultures which remain to be decoded and defined.

The Bibliography encompasses all the work on African signs and symbols of which I am currently aware. It also includes other works on African cultures which struck me as pertinent to the understanding of the workings of symbolism. The reader will undoubtedly notice that these publications are primarily Francophone, which, for several reasons, were the sources most accessible to me. Given that my primary goal here was not the compilation of a bibliography and, moreover, that my principal sources are the results of as-yet-unpublished field work, I make no claim as to the Bibliography's exhaustiveness. Additional bibliographic information will be made available as my work progresses.

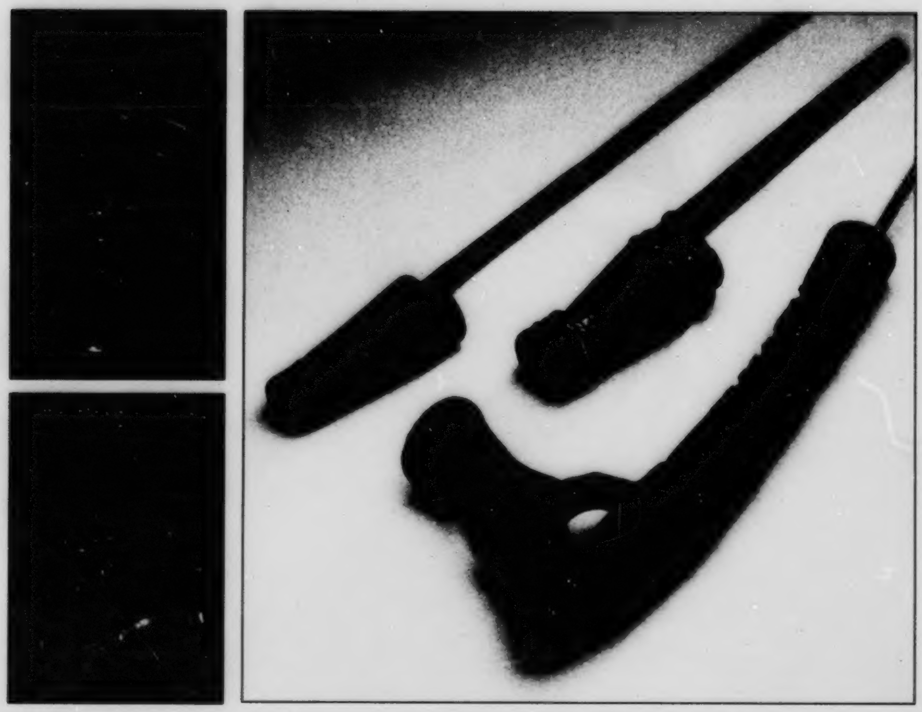
Terms and Abbreviations Used

The terminology employed here is the same as that defined in *Symboles graphiques en Afrique noire* (1992):

- A graphic sign is a mark or set of marks considered uniquely for its appearance.
- A graphic symbol or sign-symbol, is a mark or set of marks which refers to a known meaning recognized in its culture of origin.

References to authors are noted in the text of the Glossary itself by abbreviations consisting of the first three letters of the author's surname (this also applies to hyphenated surnames), followed by the publication date of the work concerned.

[CAL-GRI 1965, p. 88]
[DIE & CIS 1972: p. 140, No.20]
[FAÏ-NZU 1972]
[FU-KIA 1969]
[GRI & DIE 1951: p. 27, fig. 60]
[MUL 1986].



Bamun Pipes (Cameroon)

Symbol of rank and honour, Bamun pipes are constructed, generally by men, out of a variety of natural materials including clay, wood, copper, tin and other metals. In addition to their function of maintaining and consolidating friendships and social relationships generally, they also play a role in specific rituals including those related to farming, exorcism and rain, and thus possess an elaborate symbolic value.

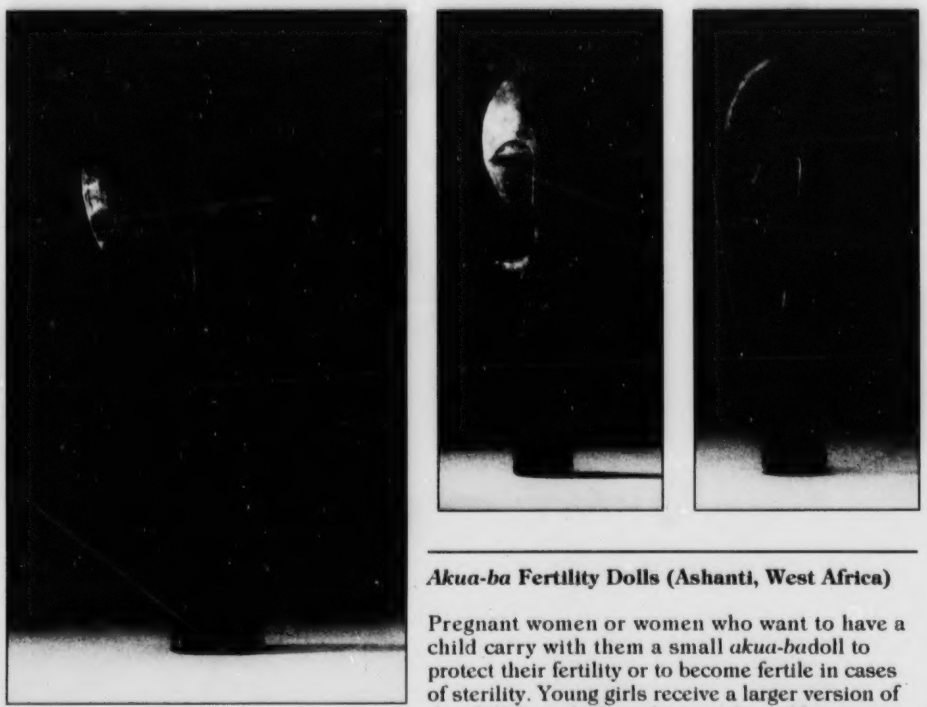
As the Bibliography has been arranged alphabetically by author, the reader may easily locate sources by consulting the following list of author abbreviations:

CILTADE Files

MFU	Mfunyi

Bibliography (Books and Articles)

BIT	Bittremieux
CAL-GRI	Calame-Griaule
CIS	Cissé
DIE	Dieterlen
FAÏ-NZU	Faïk-Nzuji

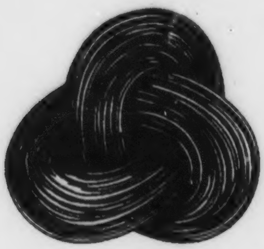


***Akua-ba* Fertility Dolls (Ashanti, West Africa)**

Pregnant women or women who want to have a child carry with them a small *akua-ba*doll to protect their fertility or to become fertile in cases of sterility. Young girls receive a larger version of this doll from their mothers or their older sisters in order to attract both grace and fertility. By playing with their dolls, which they dress, care for and speak to like young girls everywhere, they progressively familiarize themselves with their future role as mothers.

FOU	Fourche
FU-KIA	Fu-Kiau
GAN	Ganay (de)
GRA	Gravrand
GRI	Griaule
HAM	Hamelberger
JES	Jespers
KUB	Kubik
MOR	Morlighem
MUL	Mulinda
NGO	Ngonga
NIA-BOU	Niangoran-Bouah
ROU-EBE	Roumeguère-Eberhardt
WAU	Wauters

Glossary of African Graphic Signs and their Symbolic Fields

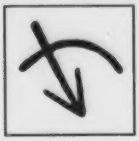


"The universe is one. Everything is connected."

A

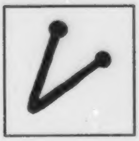
Abundance

Abundance, increase, development, multiplication.



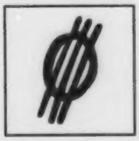
1 Multiplication, increase, development (of society). The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.125, No.77].

**Union*



2 Abundance. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.127, No.83].

**Both your hands*

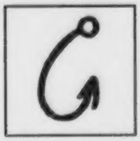


3 Abundance. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.190, No.3].

**Water laden with vital forces*

➤ CIRCLE ➤ QUANTITY

Activity

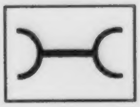


4 Human activity (physical and spiritual), active or latent traces of the whirlwind of creation found in all living creatures. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.173, No.239].

**Several footprints*

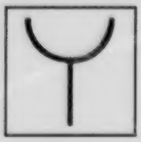
Agreement

Agreement, accord, unison, harmony; consent, approval; membership, alliance, friendship, affinity; benevolence, communion of thoughts and feelings, listening, opening, understanding; to be in good health; fulfilment of a wish.



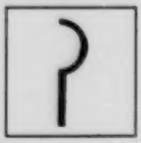
5 To be in good condition, to be "in tune", literally as well as figuratively. Toma, Liberia.

**Agreement*



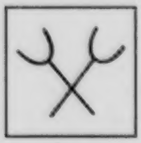
6 Total agreement, fulfilment of a wish. Ohendo, Zaire.

**Fulfilment of a wish*



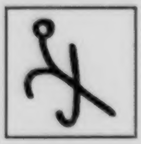
7 Partial agreement. Ohendo, Zaire.

**Fulfilment of a wish*



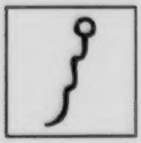
8 Membership. Toma, Liberia.

**Membership*



9 Accord, dialogue. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.163, No.202].

**Harmony of action*



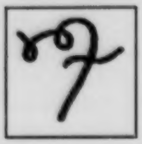
10 Inner approval, benevolence, listening, opening ➤ OPENING. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.138, No.118].

**Yes!*

➤ ALLIANCE ➤ DISAGREEMENT ➤ COMMITMENT
➤ OPENING ➤ UNION

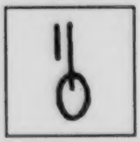
Aid, Help

Aid, help, call for help, assistance, support, mutual aid.



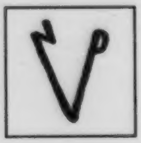
11 Call for help from supernatural forces. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.128, No.86].

**Since I left*



12 Assistance and support from the Spirit Faro, Master of the Word, Organizer of the Universe. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.139, No.120].

**He came down*



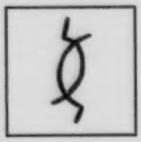
13 Help, assistance. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.166, No.216].

**To bring help*

➤ FAMILY ➤ UNION

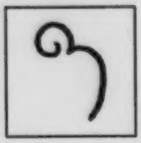
Air

Air, ether, winds.



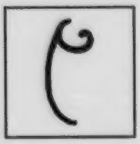
14 Sign of all winds, symbol of protection against tornadoes ➤ PROTECTION. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.58A].

**The origin of the wind*



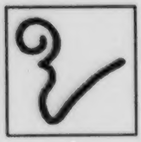
15 Sign of cold wind which engenders rain, male and auspicious. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.58B].

**Cold wind*



16 Sign of hot wind which carries sickness and epidemics, female and ill-fated. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.58C].

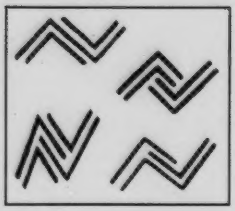
**Hot wind*



17 Sign of warm wind which rises and falls, neither hot nor cold, and is favourable to men. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.58D].

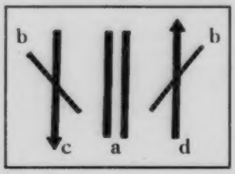
**The spiral*

Alliance, accord, agreement, charter, consent, couple, commitment, pact.



18 Variations of the sign symbolizing alliance, charter, consent, couple, commitment. Central Africa.

**Pact*



19 Alliance, accord, commitment, pact. Ohendo. Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Alliance*

Sign composed of four elements:

a) the symbol of the sower representing the two parties who agreed upon the alliance ➤ TWIN-NESS

**The sower*

b) sign of laxity, disregard, separation. It symbolizes the breach of the accord, separation, removal ➤ FRAGILITY

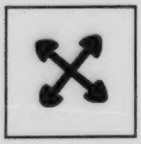
**Release*

c) the arrow pointing downwards symbolizes an unforeseeable attack, fall, death, deficiency ➤ DEATH

**Spear*

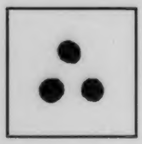
d) the arrow pointing upwards symbolizes life, progress, superiority, affluence and abundance ➤ PROGRESSION

**Spear*



20 Charter, agreement. West African.

**The meeting of hats*



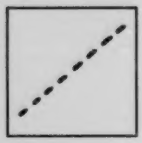
21 Stone of alliance. The Dogon of Mali, [GRI & DIE 1951: p.18C]. This sign represents three hearthstones and carries the same symbolism for the Luba and Lulua of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**Stone of alliance*

➤ AGREEMENT ➤ COMMITMENT ➤ UNION

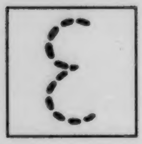
Ancestors, Spirits

The Ancestors, The Spirits, spiritual entities, the first men, the ancestral world, the movement of ancestors, the virtues of ancestors.



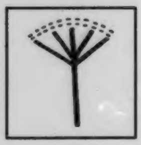
22 Ancestors, spirits. In Central Africa, most notably among those who dwell along the banks of the Kasai and Lulua rivers in Zaire, the broken line may equally represent ancestors or spirits, good or bad; intermediaries between the visible and the invisible; messengers from the beyond. The discontinuity indicates the repetitive interruption in the cycle of things and signifies that the Ancestors and Spirits are as much a part of the visible as the invisible world; that they come and then go away, only to return again afterwards. [FAÏ-NZU 1992; FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**The Ancestors* or **The Spirits*



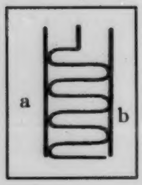
23 Virtues possessed by the Ancestors: being at hand, accessible; understanding, listening ➤ OPENING. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU 1992; FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**The ears (of the Ancestors)*



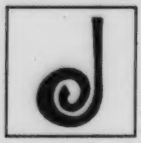
24 Virtues possessed by the Ancestors and the Spirits, that they pass on to the living or that permits them to protect the living. Protection of the living by their dead ➤ SPIRITS, PROTECTION. Ohendo, Zaire [FAÏ-NZU 1992; FAÏ & NGO].

**Virtues of the Ancestors*



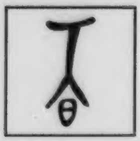
25 Movement of the Ancestors between their village and the afterlife. [FAÏ-NZU 1992; FAÏ-NZU & NGO].
a) the afterlife
b) the village

**The travelling of the Ancestors*



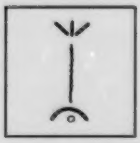
26 Afterlife, the ancestral world, fertility (of the ground) ➤ FERTILITY. The Akan of West Africa. [NIA-BOU 1984: p.248].

**Male and female*



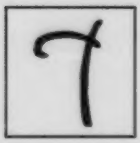
27 The first celestial ancestors ➤ TWIN-NESS. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.90].

**Double chain*



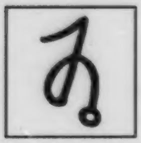
28 God, the Ancestors ➤ GOD. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1992: p.249].

**God*



29 The first human beings who populated the earth, people of the past, the first ancestors. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.117, No.63].

**Ancient times*

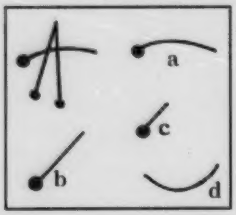


30 Great ancestors, first human beings, protection by the Ancestors ➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ PROTECTION. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.119, No.66].

**First human beings*

➤ GOD ➤ FERTILITY ➤ TWIN-NESS ➤ PRIMACY
➤ OPENING

Animals



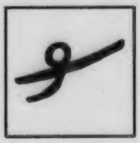
31 Animals, particularly quadrupeds. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.47].

**Four mothers*

a) horses
b) bovids (domestic cattle, buffalo, goats, antelope, etc.)
c) mules
d) sheep

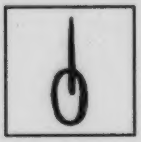
Appeal (the act of calling)

Appeal, convening, response to an appeal.



32 Appeal, convocation, signal given through a copper instrument to convene the initiated. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.84, No.2].

**Copper*

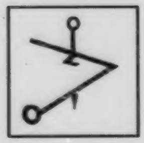


33 Response to an appeal ➤ AGREEMENT ➤ COMMITMENT. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.139, No.119].

**Yes!*

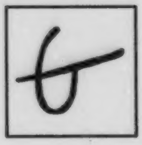
Aspiration

Aspiration, desire, inner searching, quest.



34 Aspiration, desire, searching, quest. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

**Longing*



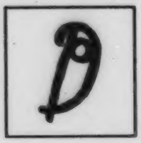
35 Aspiration, inner need to believe in God, initial dualism of the word, of faith. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.88, No.8].

**The things of God*

➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ GOD ➤ OPENING

Authority

Authority, power, strength, to command responsibility.

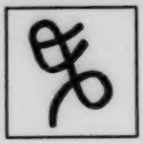


36 Authority, responsibility, leadership, power. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: 136, No.109].

**The mastery that rests in authority*

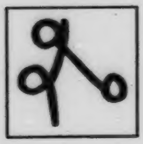
Kifwebe Mask (Songye, Kasai region, Zaire)

According to the world view characterizing populations of the Kasai region (including the Songye people), this mask functions, among other things, to keep death at bay. The term *kifwebe* literally means that which "chases death away" or "makes death run away". In Songye cosmogony, the *Kifwebe* mask draws on the symbolism of the three-stranded braid, symbol of the human being as a synthesis of three forces: spiritual, physical and emotional. (Wanters, 1949).



37 To order, to command, to exercise authority. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.170, No.230].

**Get up!*



38 To order, to command, to exercise authority. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.171, No.232].

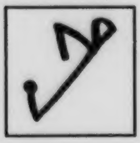
**Get out of there!*

➤ POWER ➤ ROYALTY

B

Beauty

Beauty, elegance, joviality, harmony.

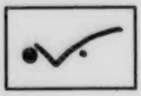


1 Beauty, elegance, joviality, harmony. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.132, No.97].

**Beauty*

➤ EQUILIBRIUM ➤ HARMONY

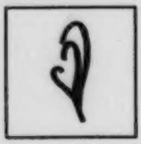
Birds



2 Sign of birds: waders, birds of prey, nocturnal birds, storks and other migratory birds. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.52, fig.7A].

**Birds in flight*

Blessing



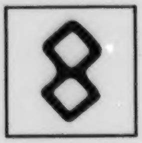
3 Blessing, good fortune, luck, divine gifts. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.106, No.35].

**Blessings*

➤ CROSSROADS ➤ GOOD FORTUNE ➤ DIVINE GIFTS
➤ GRACE ➤ WORD

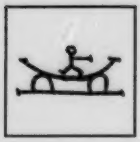
Bond

Bond, domination, imprisonment, bewitchment, curse, possession.



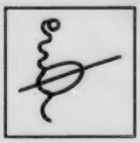
4 Bad company, domination, bewitchment, possession. West Africa.

**Handcuffs*



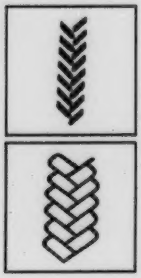
5 Imprisonment, bewitchment, possession. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**Prison*



6 Prison. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.148, No.148].

**Prison*



7 Among the populations of the Kasai region of Zaire, this sign encompasses several symbolic meanings of varying proximity: protection; confinement, imprisonment or bond; complete man. For certain ethnic groups, notably the Luba, the three-stranded braid symbolizes, above all, evil ties which imprison in order to dominate, which restrain and confine in order to destroy. Whereas in the cosmogony of the Songye, the three-stranded braid* symbolizes Man, the synthesis of three forces: spiritual, physical and emotional ➤ HUMAN BEING.

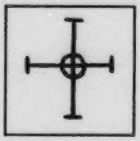
**Braid*

➤ CIRCLE ➤ LIBERTY ➤ PROTECTION

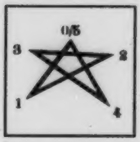
C

Cardinal Points

Cardinal points are cosmic symbols which draw on the symbolism of the crossroads, the star, the world, initiation, and in certain cases, that of God. They appear in several configurations possessing, according to the circumstances, different symbolic meanings, notably, the infinite, celestial crossroads, and the cosmic cross.



1 The four cardinal points. Songo, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.21, fig.38A].

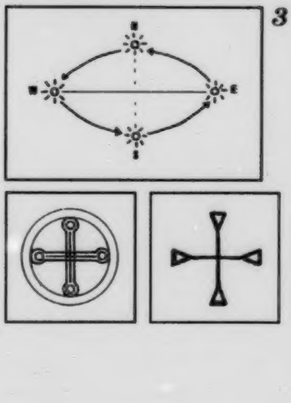


2 The star of the universe ➤ STAR. The Serer of Senegal. If one isolates the peak of the star (0/5) which signifies the Supreme Being, the remaining four points (1, 2, 3 and 4) represent the cardinal points of the universe.

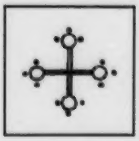
This sign is drawn on the ground or scarified onto the nape of the neck of young circumcised men during their initiation ceremony. The initiate bearing this mark - called *ô nyaas* - is placed under the protection of God.

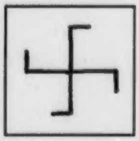
The Serer consider this sign as the map of the star of the universe ➤ STAR. It is also considered the biological symbol of man ➤ MAN. [GRA 1990].

**Provisions for a journey into the afterlife*



3 The cardinal points constitute a cosmic symbol associated with the crossroads and the cycle of life ➤ CROSSROADS, LIFE and the symbolism of the world ➤ WORLD. Man is born in the East and embarks on his journey towards the cosmic summit situated in the North, at which point he begins his slow descent towards the West where mortal death awaits him. He then continues his journey in the invisible world to the cosmic depths where he remains before being reborn. The Kongo of Zaire have developed a rich cosmogony in which life and death, the



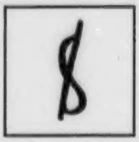


world of the living and the ancestral world are all explained by way of the cardinal points which are represented in diverse configurations. [FU-KIA 1969].

**The cross of the world*

➤ CROSSROADS ➤ GOD ➤ STAR ➤ MAN ➤ INITIATION ➤ WORLD ➤ LIFE

Caress

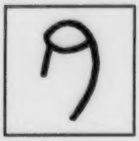


4 Caress, coaxing, fondling, delicacy, flattery ➤ LOVE. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.130, No.91].

**To caress*

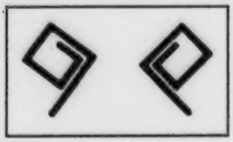
Cause, Consequence

Cause, consequence, causality, beginning, origin, reason, results.



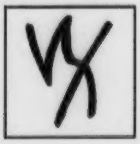
5 Beginning, cause and reason of all things, origin of knowing. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.138, No.117].

**My head*



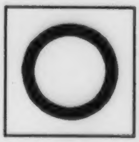
6 Signs translating the notions of causality, consequence and results (because (of), due to, on the grounds of, given that, since, seeing that, etc.). The point is directed towards the aspect that one wishes to stress.

Choice



7 Choice, sorting out. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.171, No.235].

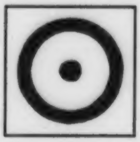
**Action of choosing or sorting*



8 Circle. Diverse symbolism pertaining to the circle: the afterlife; God the Creator, the Supreme Being enveloping the world, the Spirit which conceived the universe, origin of all things; immutability, celestial matrix, the number 1; order, perfection, completeness, plenitude; country (territory), protection, power, royalty, divine royalty, holiness; the sun, totality, unity, universe [FAÏ-NZU 1994]. To these different meanings must be added that of the interaction and interdependence which links human beings and the things of creation. This notion is very much present among the Songye of Zaire. The circle is conceived of as a double rainbow driven by a vital cyclical movement. The Bambara of Mali compare the space surrounded by the circle to a hollow and liken it to a secret, to that which is not revealed. [GAN 1987].

The Dogon reproduce the circle to ask God to protect them like a shield. West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.29, fig.67].

Configurations of the Circle



9 In the cosmogony of the peoples of the Kasai region of Zaire, the circle is called "the mark of the beginning", "the coiling-up". With a central point, it symbolizes the first metamorphosis of God, the Guide, the Chief. This point is also interpreted as the condensation of the universe in the creation process. [FAÏ-NZU 1994]. Among the Akan of West Africa, it symbolizes the spirit of God the Creator, the universe turning on its axis.

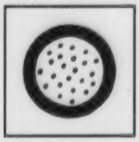
For the Dogon, the circle with a central point is sometimes interpreted as a symbol of the world with the earth at its centre.

**White earth*

This circle is equally the symbol of the ark in which *Nommo* the Instructor descended to earth with all creatures (represented at its centre). [GRI & DIE 1951].

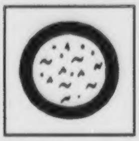
The contents of the Ark

For the Malinke and the Bambara of Mali, the centre and the circumference of the circle represent respectively: the basis and the reason for all things*; the substratum and the plenitude of all things*; the great foundation and the great circle of creation or coming (of birth)*; the soul and its twin*; the voice of creation and of the coming (of birth)*; in Bambara the words designating the centre and the circumference of the circle also signify destiny and the future*, reflection and thought*; things of the depths below and things of the world above* and, by analogy, desire and will*; the great unknowable depth below and the great irreducible limit (in all its dimensions)*. [CIS 1973].



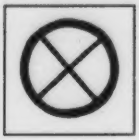
10 The movement of God's metamorphosis which brings about creation in the form of a large unwinding spiral ➤ CREATION. The multiplicity of creatures scattered by the movement of God's first metamorphosis. Luba, Zaire.

**The trail* or **Dispersion*

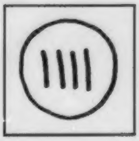


11 Differentiation of beings brought about by the impact of creatures in movement ➤ DIFFERENCE. Luba, Zaire.

**The trail* or **Dispersion*

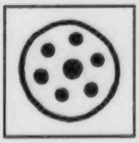


12 Among the Serer of Senegal, the circle evokes the Supreme Being enveloping the world, the two intersecting lines in its centre representing life on earth. The juncture of the two lines suggests mating, the origin of all human and animal life. [GRA 1990].



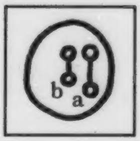
13 The circle of the world surrounding the earth, represented by four vertical marks which symbolize the Creator's fingers. Dogon. Niger Loop, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.16 fig.16B].

Earth



14 The Pleiades Constellation. For the Dogon of the Wazouba region, a circle with a central point surrounded by six smaller points represents the Pleiades Constellation. The sign symbolizes the ball of the world containing seeds, the two original twins and a hen and its chicks which have all broken away from the central nucleus. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.11, fig.4].

**The Pleiades*

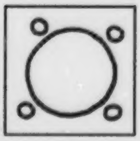


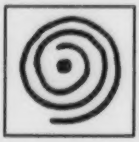
15 The Pleiades Constellation. For the Dogon, the circle represents the world:

a) the twins
b) their sacrificial cup

This sign also carries the symbolism of the preceding sign. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.12, fig.8].

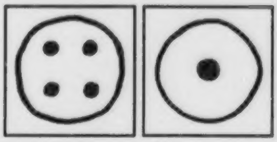
***The Pleiades**


A


B

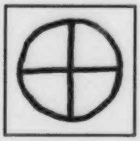
16 A and B: Both signs represent Venus in the East and at its Zenith. In sign 16A, the large circle represents the world and the four smaller circles represent the scattering of beings to the four cardinal points ➤ CARDINAL POINTS. This configuration represents Venus in the East and the Shepherd's Star, Venus at its Zenith. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.11, fig.5A and B].

**Venus in the East*
**Venus at its Zenith*



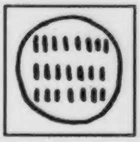
17 The ark or dugout canoe belonging to *Nommo* the Instructor who descended to earth to teach men. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.19, fig.32].

**The ark*



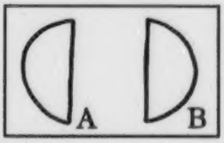
18 The world. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.19, fig.33B].

**The world*



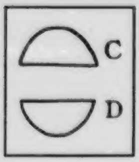
19 Reunion. The circle of the world containing the twenty-two categories of creation. Dogon of the Niger Loop region. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.19, fig.29].

Reunion



20 A and B: signs illustrating a secret place and symbolizing the hiding place, secrecy, mystery ➤ THE UNKNOWN, PROTECTION.

** The hiding place (A)*
** The valley (B)*



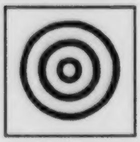
C and D: signs representing testicles, symbols of virility aided by the Ancestors and the Spirits ➤ MAN.

** Crocodile (C)*
** Spirits (D)*

For the Malinke and the Bambara of Mali, the two semicircles together connote thought and reflection that is both divine and human*. [CIS 1973].

Concentric Circles

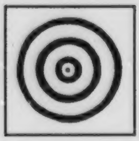
The number of rings adds diverse symbolic nuances to the circle, varying according to the culture of origin. Concentric circles are also called cosmic circles or rings, and like circles are sometimes represented in segments, while still maintaining their symbolism.



21 Three concentric circles
Depending on the context, the three concentric circles may be viewed as a symbol of the Supreme Being ➤ GOD; of growth, harmony, hierarchy, multiplication ➤ ABUNDANCE; of origins ➤ ORIGIN; of order, perfection, the first word, plenitude ➤ PLENITUDE; of the word ➤ WORD. In the cosmogonies and initiation texts of the peoples of the Kasai region of Zaire (notably the Songye, Luba, Lulua, Bakwele, Kuba and Chokwe) the three concentric circles - called "the marks of the beginning" - appear in different contexts as a divine symbol of the first creation, drawing on the numerical symbolism of "three", a perfect and complete number which governs the creation of superior things. Examples of this numerical symbolism are found in the three stages of creation: the creation of the Supreme Being himself, the creation of things above and the creation of things below; the three primordial spirits of the creation principle: the Creator, the Organizer and the One who makes things grow; the three creative powers: the Word, the Act and the Breath. [FOU & MOR 1973]. The Ohendo call this sign "the light"* and mark it on the temples of initiates to usher them into the world of light. [FAÏ-NZU 1993; FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

The Akan* and other populations of West Africa (notably in Ghana and the Ivory Coast) see this sign as a symbol of uprightness, of royal authority and of the speech of a superior, and name it after one of their kings who possessed these qualities. [NIA-BOU 1984].

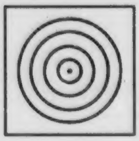
**King Adingra*



In the cosmogonies of the peoples of the Kasai region of Zaire, the three concentric circles with a point in the centre symbolize, among other things, the Supreme Being assisted by the three primordial spirits which emanate from him.

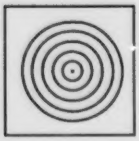
Among the populations descended from *Woot* (Kuba), Zaire, the three circles*, with or without a central point, represent the sun and possess its attributes. They symbolize, among other things, unity within hierarchy. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

**The plug securely fastened*



22 Four concentric circles
Called "the pact"* by the Luba and the Lulua of the Kasai region of Zaire. In the schema of the grand lodge of the assembly of magicians, the four concentric circles represent the distance at which, during meetings, the four dignitaries stand in relation to the great lord, who is represented by the central point ➤ CROSSROADS. [FOU & MOR 1973].

**The pact*



23 Five concentric circles
Five concentric circles represent, among other things, the number of groups that constitute the Luba of Zaire and the manner by which these populations recognize themselves to be descended from a common ancestor (*Ílúngá Mbidi*) forming a large homogeneous linguistic-cultural complex. From the centre outwards, the rings represent:

nuclear families
extended families
lineages
clans
the people or tribe

In certain circumstances, a central point represents the ego.

Ten concentric circles
The earth. Ten concentric circles divided by the sign of the crossroads is the symbol of the earth

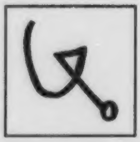
➤ CROSSROADS ➤ WORLD. The earth possesses the numerical order of ten and all of its contents may be classified into ten circles. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

Eleven concentric circles
The world of darkness. Circles with eleven concentric rings contain an evil force, linked to the depths of the earth into which condemned souls are plunged to become malevolent wandering spirits. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

Twelve concentric circles
The celestial place. Twelve concentric circles divided by the sign of the crossroads is the symbol of the highest heaven, the Beyond, the place where the Supreme Being and the higher spirits dwell. The Supreme Being created great things in series of "three times four" and arranged them according to the divisions of the crossroads and the orientation of its paths. Twelve is thus the number of the highest heaven, an even number, perfect and complete ➤ CREATION. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

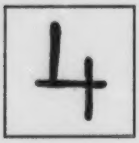
➤ ABUNDANCE ➤ CREATION ➤ DISCERNMENT
➤ EVOLUTION ➤ HARMONY ➤ WORD ➤ INITIATION
➤ MATURITY ➤ WORLD ➤ PLENITUDE ➤ PROTECTION
➤ SPIRAL ➤ STABILITY

Circumcision



24 Circumcision, initiation. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: 136, No.111].

**Washing of the hand*

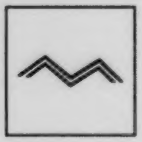


25 The sign of circumcision. Bambara, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.66, fig.1].

**The star of circumcision*

➤ INITIATION

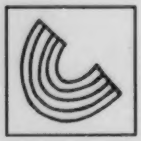
Commitment



26 Commitment, accord, alliance, guarantee, bond, marriage. Among the Ohendo and the Luba of Zaire who use it in initiation scarification, this sign draws on the symbolism of the double diamond, which symbolizes a woman accomplished in lovemaking and marriage ➤ LOVE, MARRIAGE. [FAÏ-NZU 1992; FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

The double chevron is thus a representation of the diamond shape whose parts are no longer one on top of the other, but side by side. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

**Like the banana tree*



27 Guarantee, consent, couple, commitment, marriage. When commitment is envisaged in the general sense of a promise (e.g. of marriage) or an agreement, the orientation of the sign is not important. But in the context of marriage, when it is scarified onto the front of the thighs of a new young mother, the orientation changes according to whether her child is a boy or a girl. For a boy, the sign will be turned upwards (as shown here), for a girl it will be turned downwards.

The symbol has thus acquired the meaning of the stairway of generations ➤ GENERATIONS.

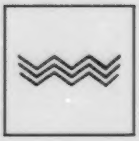
**The guarantee* or **The ladder of generations*

➤ AGREEMENT ➤ ALLIANCE ➤ WOMAN ➤ TWIN-NESS ➤ MARRIAGE

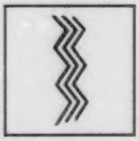
Communication

Communication, contact, relation, unity respecting hierarchy.

28 In a great number of Central African cultures (including the Songye, Luba, Lulua, Bakwele, Kuba and Chokwe) the symbolism of "communication" is conferred upon the chevron (v-shaped line) by the number three which embodies the notion of balance ➤ EQUILIBRIUM and perfect conformity. Examples of this symbolism are found in: the communication with higher forces implying a link between the Supreme Being, the Ancestors, and living persons; a society's stability which depends on the good relations between its chief, its distinguished members and its people; the formation of the family unit requiring a man, a woman and a child; the institution of marriage itself which is contingent upon the consent of the couple, the young man's family and the family of the young woman; and all this, in the presence of God, the Ancestors and the community of the living. The symbolism of the number three is reinforced by the very shape of the sign: the apex of each chevron represents a place of discourse, the point at which communication creates a relationship. The spatial orientation of the sign defines its symbolism.



The horizontal chevron pattern symbolizes horizontal communication between men in the context of their shared life experience.



The vertical chevron pattern symbolizes vertical communication with God and with cosmic energies, power and greatness.

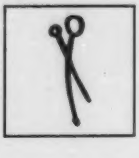
In the Tutsi and Hutu cultures of Rwanda and Burundi, the notion of communication is often represented by one chevron. But in general, a single chevron conveys a different meaning ➤ INITIATION, TRANSMUTATION, VIBRATION. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

**That which unifies*
**That which links*

For the Dogon of the Niger Loop, the chevron pattern symbolizes vibration and water in movement. West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951].

➤ HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS ➤ ROYALTY ➤ UNION
➤ VIBRATION

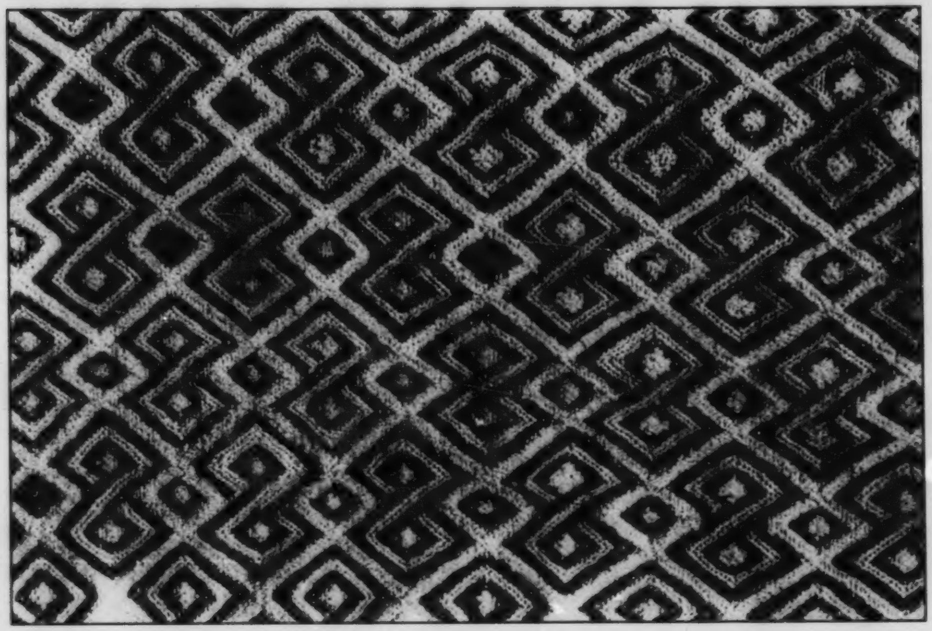
Complexity



29 Complex situation or problem, secret affair, complication, entanglement. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.112, 52].

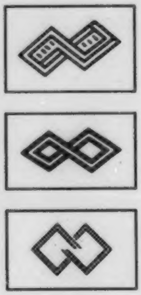
**Thing that flies*

➤ HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS ➤ QUESTIONING



Coordination (C30 B); Mediation (M28 B, C)

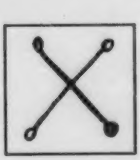
Coordination



30 The notion of coordination signifying: "in other words", "this means", "that's why", "in such a way that", etc. These signs also contain the notion of mediation, message or messenger. Central Africa.

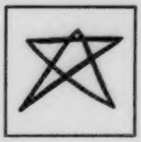
➤ MEDIATION ➤ MESSAGE

Country



31 Country, one's home, common origin. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1992: p.97].

**Country*



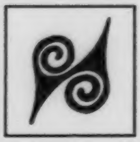
32 Chief's domain, kingdom, territory ➤ STAR. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

**The chief's domain*

➤ FAMILY ➤ STAR ➤ ORIGIN

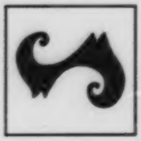
Courage

Courage, bravery, moral force, perseverance.



33 Courage, bravery, moral force, perseverance. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

**"Stand firm!"*



34 Courage, bravery, moral force, perseverance. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

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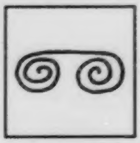

35 Courage, bravery, moral force, perseverance. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

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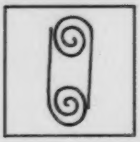
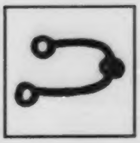
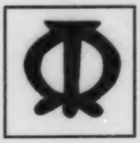




36 Courage in the face of life's difficulties. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.107, No.37].

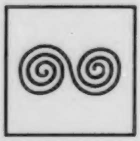
**Red*



37 Perseverance, courage, moral force. Ashanti, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast.

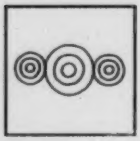
**Perseverance*

➤ EVOLUTION ➤ MASTERY ➤ MATURITY

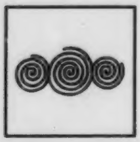


38 The creation of the universe, put into initial motion by an androgynous primordial being. West African populations; Hutu and Tutsi populations of Rwanda and Burundi.

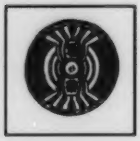
* *"A masculine-feminine God (God-Goddess) proceeding with creation"*



39 Three juxtaposed concentric circles: the unchanging symbol of God the Creator, assisted by the sun and the moon. The sun is the diurnal (daytime) extension of the Creator and the moon its nocturnal counterpart. The sun is the brilliance of the Creator's forehead, and the moon is the radiance of the back of the Creator's head. ➤ CIRCLE. Luba cosmogony, Zaire.



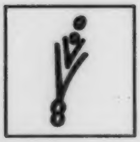
40 Three juxtaposed spirals: dynamic symbol of God in the act of creation, assisted by the sun (male, diurnal extension) and the moon (female, noctural extension) ➤ SPIRAL.



41 Mystical sign representing a spider weaving its web, the act of creation. Common to several ethnic groups of West Africa.

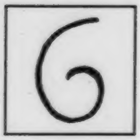
**Traces of the spider*

With its web, the spider appears in diverse cosmogonies as the image of God creating the world, or as the insect which, shortly after creation, helped God to gather men who were inclined to wander away. In certain languages, the name for "spider" also designates God, as it does among the Songye of Zaire, who call it *bééyá*, "the perfect one"* ➤ GOD



42 Works carried out by the Creator on the earth and in the sky. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.168, No.62].

**This is for the sky and the earth.*



43 Movement before creation. This sign also symbolizes the journeys made by *Nommo*, the Son of God, between the earth and the sky. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.16, fig.15B].

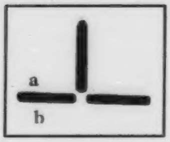
**Red copper*

➤ CIRCLE ➤ GOD ➤ WORLD ➤ WORD ➤ SPIRAL

Crossroads

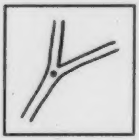
Crossroads, intersection, circulation of energies, confusion, helplessness, doubt, hesitation, a place of exchange, transformation or meeting. Crossroads figure in the symbolism of cardinal points and cosmic symbols.

Crossroads of three paths



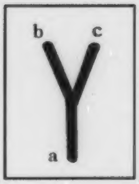
44 Cosmic crossroads of the Woyo of Zaire and Angola. The two horizontal segments separate the world of the living, from that of the dead. The vertical axis links the earth with the heavens ➤ WORLD. [MUL 1986].
a) the world of the living
b) the world of the dead

**Crossroads of three paths*



45 Crossroads of purification used by the Kongo of Zaire in the initiation of the *lèmba* (the future leaders of the country) as part of their formal education ➤ PURIFICATION. [FU-KIA 1969].

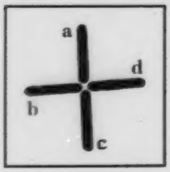
**Crossroads of purification*



46 Among the Bambara of Mali, this sign symbolizes the chief's dominion:
a) the path leading to the chief's hut
b) the village and its fields representing the harnessing of nature
c) the sacred forest, the domain of supernatural powers

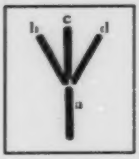
Among the Dagara of Burkina Faso and other West African ethnic groups the fork in the road represented by this sign symbolizes:
a) the village
b) the fields
c) the unknown world

Crossroads



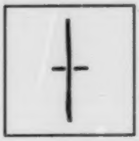
47 Symbol of the four stages of life in the religious beliefs of the Woyo of Zaire and Angola ➤ LIFE. [MUL 1986].
a) birth
b) youth
c) adulthood
d) death

**Crossing*



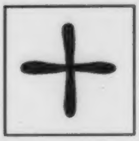
48 Among the Woyo: symbol of the village; crossing point from a village to other places. [MUL 1986].
a) the village
b) c) and **d)**: other places

**Parting of ways*



49 What must be crossed. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.19, fig.30].

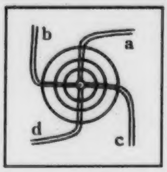
Crossing



50 Crossroads of good fortune ➤ BLESSING, GOOD FORTUNE. Among the Luba of Zaire, parents wish their children well in life by marking the sign of the crossroads at the soft point of the infant's skull while speaking words of blessing. This part of the body is considered to be the point at which future events are discerned.

In the same region, among the Ohendo, during initiation, the master initiator traces the crossroads sign on the forehead of each initiate in kaolin while repeating the words: "the crossroads are at the same time the drum of the beyond and the dance of the world". The young man thus identified becomes like the crossroads — a meeting place between the living and the spirits. With this title he is invested with the power to avoid evil and to favour good, as if leaving his past behind to be reborn.

** Crossroads of good fortune*



51 Crossroads of the four routes giving access to royal magic*. The Kasai region, Zaire. [FOU & MOR 1973: p.258].

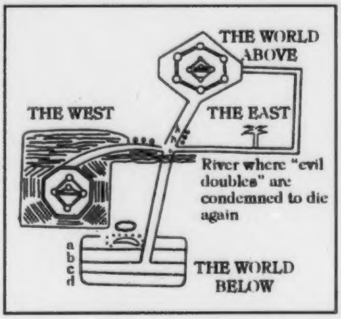
a) the route to the magic of despondency (ignorance, trial and error)

b) the direct route of lords, holders of the insignia of dignitaries

c) the route of mediums specialized in matters related to war

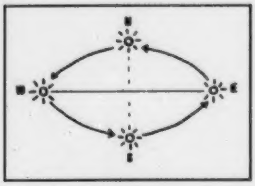
d) the route of mediums specialized in the problems of daily life ➤ EARTH

**Magic crossroads*

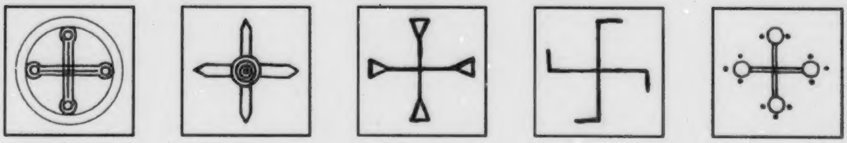


52 Crossroads of the Milky Way or the Last Judgement. The Kasai region of Zaire. After death, the soul winds its way towards the heavens. At the Milky Way, it is subjected to a judgment of its earthly existence which the soul must defend. If judged innocent, it is sent to the East to the village of its ancestors who, with the spirits of its clan, await the soul's arrival. If judged guilty, the soul must go to the West where it is hurled into the bowels of the earth ➤ DEATH. [FOU & MOR 1973: p.262].

**Crossroads of the Milky Way*

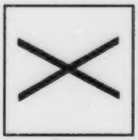


53 Crossroads of the life cycle ➤ DEATH, LIFE. For the Kongo of Zaire the cross, representing crossroads, symbolizes the life cycle of man, which is similar to the trajectory of the sun. Like the sun, man embarks upon his life's voyage from the East, continuing towards the West, and like the sun, reaches the zenith of his existence at the summit of the cosmic mountain of life. He then descends towards the West ending his journey in the ocean, the door to the village of the dead, where, in order to find his way out and be reborn, he must traverse the depths of the cosmos.

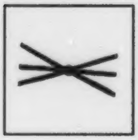


Crossroads of the life cycle (variations). Kongo, Zaire.

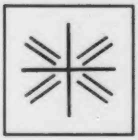
54 Crossroads. Stylizations often found in Central Africa:



- in braided or wickerwork objects, and in the form of the small copper cross once used as money in the Shaba and Kasai regions



- in the scarification of Luba women of the Shaba and Kasai regions and Batetela women of the Kasai region, Zaire

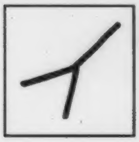


- in Chokwe graphic symbolism (Zaire and Angola)

➤ ANCESTORS ➤ ENERGIES ➤ WORLD ➤ CARDINAL POINTS ➤ LIFE

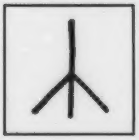
Culture

Culture, ancestors, customs, heritage, stability, traditions.



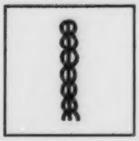
55 Stability, culture, traditions, power, support. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**Roots*



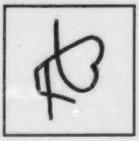
56 Entrenchment, roots.

**Roots*



57 Customs. Dogon. West Africa [GRI & DIE 1951: p.26, fig.50].

**Custom*

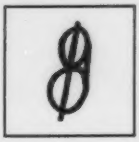


58 Entrenchment, enculturation, remnants. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.126, No.79].

**Ruins*

➤ EQUILIBRIUM ➤ INITIATION ➤ STABILITY ➤ UNION

Curse



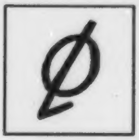
59 Curse, but also a sign of reconciliation. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.106, No.34].

**Curse*

➤ BOND

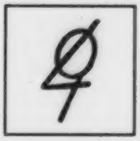
D

Damage



1 Damage. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.190, No.5].

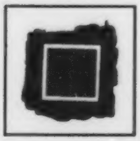
**The male mountain's water*



2 Damage. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.191, No.6].

**The female mountain's water*

Day / Night (duality)

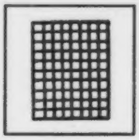


3 Duality: day/night, light/darkness. Symbol of Good and Evil. West Africa.

➤ TWIN-NESS

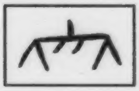
Death, Mortality

Death, mortality, annihilation, disappearance.



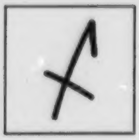
4 Equality in the face of death. The Kasai region of Zaire.

**The mat of death*



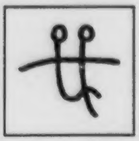
5 Deterioration of things, death which gives life. The progress of the constellation of Orion from the East to the West, from life towards death ➤ DEATH. This sign also signifies life, renewal ➤ LIFE; the disappearance of Orion below the horizon coincides with the arrival of the first rains (the revival of plants). [JES 1992: p.238 and 240].

**Man-star*



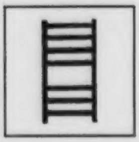
6 Death, annihilation. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.96, No.19].

**Death*



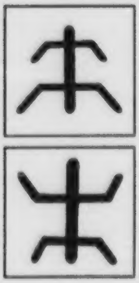
7 Completion, death, ending. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.174, No.243].

**Death*



8 Ladder of death, alternation between life and death, change of residence. West Africa.

"All men will climb the ladder of death."



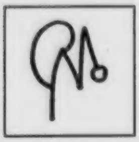
9 The messenger of death. Bamileke, Cameroon. This sign appears with various stylizations. Among the Luba, when a woman is pregnant, the lizard, like the snake, announces the approaching birth of a male child. It is also the symbol of transmutation ➤ TRANSMUTATION.

The lizard

➤ ALLIANCE ➤ CROSSROADS ➤ ENERGIES
➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ LIFE

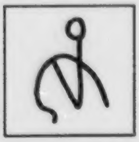
Departure

Departure, voyage, migration, displacement.



10 Departure, voyage, displacement. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.166, No.217].

For leaving

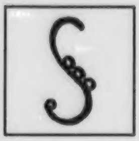


11 Departure, voyage, displacement. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.167, No.219].

Come so that we can go into the hut.

➤ PATH ➤ SPIRAL

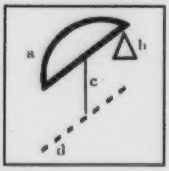
Destiny, Fate



12 Destiny, fate. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.114, No.55].

**The voice of creation*

Dexterity

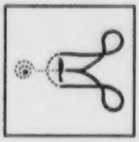


13 Dexterity, skill, skillfulness, straightness, precision. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO]. This symbol comprises four signs that can function independently:

a) protection, defence ➤ PROTECTION
b) balance ➤ EQUILIBRIUM
c) relationship ➤ RELATION
d) spirits, ancestors ➤ ANCESTORS

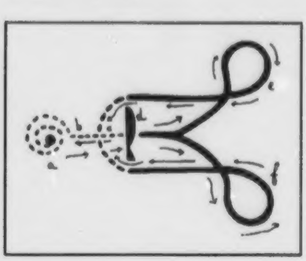
**Dexterity*

Difference, Inequality



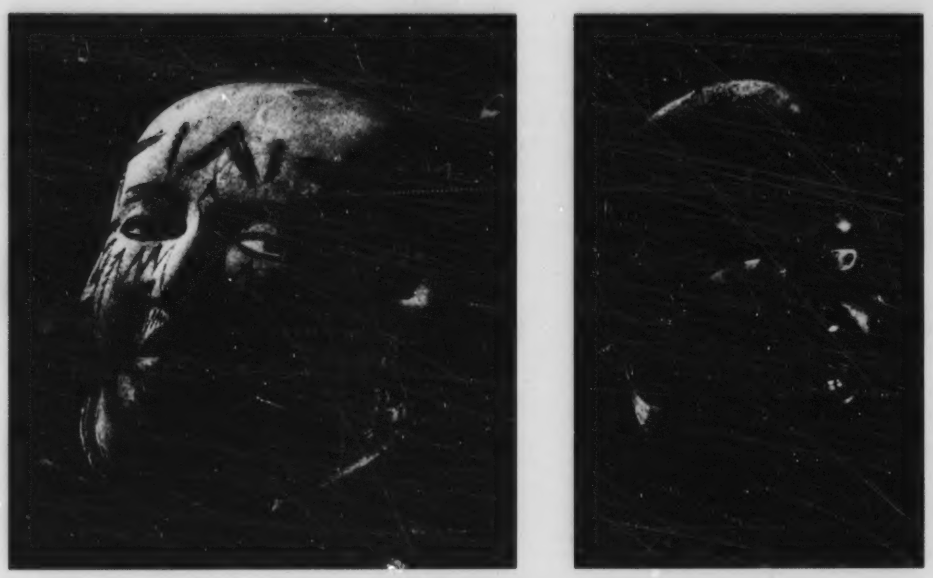
14 Difference, inequality. The symbol comprises ten signs which can function independently as autonomous symbols. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**The difference*



a) discretion, mystery, reserve ➤ THE UNKNOWN
b) maturity, wisdom, ancestors, spirits (represented by dotted lines) ➤ ANCESTORS ➤ SPIRAL ➤ CREATION ➤ GOD
c) the progression of man's existence, life on earth
d) work, strength and change
e) and f) social stratification and difference: the upper part of the sign represents wealth, worthiness, success and an honourable social position resulting from work and personal effort; the lower part represents poverty, social failure, an inferior situation.

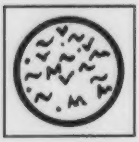
The reading of the symbol begins on the left at the point of first origin and continues to the right where it divides into two different-sized loops, returning eventually to the point of departure.



Initiation Masks (Makonde Mavia, Tanzania and Mozambique)

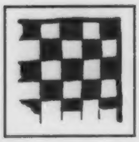
The Makonde trace their lineage using a matriarchal system. The mask on the right represents the primordial male ancestor. This mask is worn exclusively by the master initiator during initiatory teaching at which time he explains the laws governing the complementary nature of male-female relations as well as what follows from the observation and transgression of these laws in the context of the couple. At the end of the initiation, during an animated closing ceremony, the initiates hold up the mask as a sign of their knowledge of the mysterious language of signs and to demonstrate the role this mask plays in the relationship between life and death.

The lip-plug in the upper lip of the mask on the left indicates that this mask represents the primordial female ancestor; a feature that is absent in its male counterpart. According to Makonde Mavia creation myth, man, the first to arrive on earth, fashioned a figure out of wood which, during the night, came to life and became his wife. Women do not wear this mask. It is worn exclusively by the master initiator.



15 Differentiation of beings brought about by the collision of creatures in movement ➤ CIRCLE. Luba, Zaire.

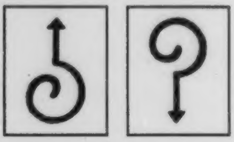
**The trail* or **Dispersal*



16 Classification and differentiation of men and things ➤ CIRCLE. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.25, fig.45].

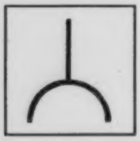
**Classified, distinguished, separated*

Direction



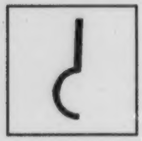
17 Signs depicting the notion of direction, orientation, the route to be followed ➤ PATH.

Disagreement



18 Total disagreement, disapproval, the categorical "No".

**Total disagreement*

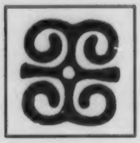


19 Partial disagreement. The sign can be turned to the left or to the right depending on whether its connotation is masculine or feminine (as shown here). Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Partial disagreement*

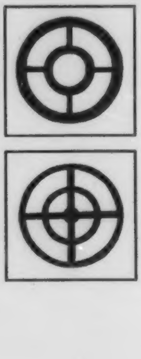
➤ AGREEMENT ➤ ALLIANCE ➤ COMMITMENT ➤ FRAGILITY ➤ PRECARIOUSNESS ➤ SEPARATION

Discernment

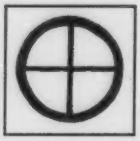


20 Discernment, common sense, clairvoyance, intelligence, judgement, lucidity, moderation, mystery, wisdom ➤ KNOWLEDGE, MATURITY, MEDITATION, MODERATION. West Africa.

**The ram's horns*



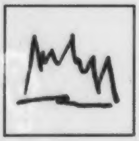
21 Clairvoyance, common sense, discernment, intelligence, lucidity, light, mystery ➤ CIRCLE. Central Africa.



22 Discernment, lucidity ➤ CIRCLE

➤ CIRCLE ➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ INITIATION ➤ MEDITATION ➤ MODERATION ➤ MATURITY ➤ SUN

Disorder



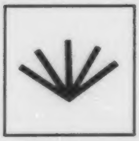
23 Disorder, disarray, discord, absurdity, confusion, stupidity, thoughtlessness, trouble. This sign is made up of randomly drawn lines giving the impression of disorder. Ohendo, Zaire.

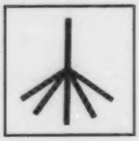
**Confusion*

➤ MADNESS ➤ EVIL

Divine Gifts

Divine gifts, grace, good fortune, luck, skills.

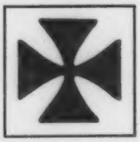


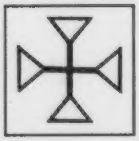


24 Divine gifts, good fortune, virtues, skills. Ohendo, Zaire.

The gifts of God are manifold; represented here (branches from left to right): Speech, Intelligence, the Pillar, Work (support, cooperation) and Procreation (fertility, creativity). Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU 1992, FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

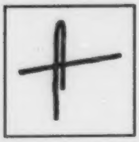
**The Hand of the Invisible*





25 Grace, divine gifts, transformation.

**To ward off misfortune*

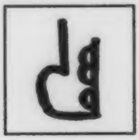


26 Divine gifts, capacity for knowledge given to man by God. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.146, No.139].

**My generous master of the heavens*

➤ BLESSING ➤ GOOD FORTUNE ➤ GRACE ➤ WEALTH

Doubt

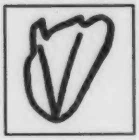


27 Doubt, hesitation, scepticism, unbelieving ➤ CROSSROADS. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & Cis 1972: p.133, No.99]

**From both sides*

CROSSROADS ➤ MISTRUST

Downfall

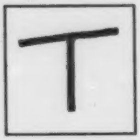


28 Downfall, failure. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.168, No.223].

**To not succeed*

➤ PROGRESSION ➤ SUCCESS

Drought



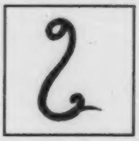
29 The dry season; lightning. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.27, fig.60].

**The pattern of dry rain*

➤ WATER ➤ FERTILITY ➤ RAIN

E

Enemy



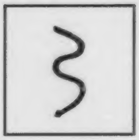
1 Enemy, adversary, hostility, enmity. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

**Enemy*

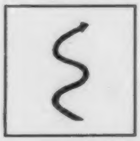
➤ HOSTILITY ➤ WICKEDNESS ➤ WORD

Energies

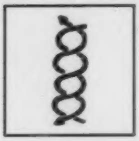
Energies, forces.



2 Descending energy, decline, passive force (feminine) ➤ DEATH



3 Rising energy, active force (masculine) ➤ GOD, LIFE

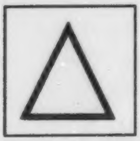


4 Circulation of energies, alternation between active and passive forces, movement of life. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire, particularly among the Songye, Luba and Ohendo.

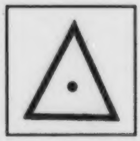
** Energies*

➤ GOD ➤ DEATH ➤ LIFE

Equilibrium



5 God, equilibrium, common sense, harmony, stability ➤ KNOWLEDGE, STABILITY. For the populations of the Kasai region of Zaire, the triangle is a symbol of the source of man's physical and spiritual life. It represents the three principle dimensions that make an

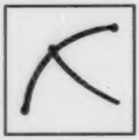


individual whole, both in life on earth and in the afterlife. It is also the symbol of replenishment, the place where man goes to draw strength to start afresh. As well, the triangle is a representation of the "hoe of the beginning"* which God gave to man so that he could cultivate the land and feed himself and which thereby draws on the numerical symbolism of three, the perfect and complete number which governs the creation of higher things. For the Bambala of Zaire, this sign symbolizes the future.

**Equilibrium*

➤ CULTURE ➤ GOD ➤ STABILITY ➤ LIFE

Evil

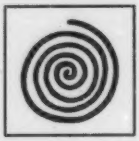


6 Evil, danger, suffering. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**Poisoned arrow*

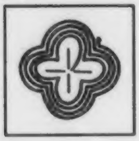
➤ MADNESS ➤ HOSTILITY ➤ POWERLESSNESS
➤ ILLNESS ➤ WICKEDNESS

Evolution



7 Evolution, continual movement of things since the first origin, line (or thread) of life. In most cases, this symbol can be drawn from either end and maintain the above connotations. But in certain contexts, the direction connotes precise nuances — counterclockwise: positive evolution, progression, growth; clockwise: negative evolution, regression, fleeing from what has been done.

** The coil*



8 Evolution, uninterrupted movement of things issuing from the celestial crossroads. Combination of the cross and the spiral. This sign draws on the symbolism of the crossroads and the cyclical nature of life. The crossroads at its centre symbolize mutation, choice, decisions and decisive meetings inherent to the human condition ➤ CROSSROADS. This sign is also the symbol of union, of the gathering of all those who recognize themselves to be linked by a single thread to the same source ➤ UNION. Luba, Zaire. [MFU 1984].

**The village hen*

➤ CROSSROADS ➤ CREATION ➤ COURAGE ➤ MASTERY ➤ PROGRESSION ➤ SPIRAL ➤ UNION

Kànaga Mask (Dogon)

One of the most celebrated of Dogon masks, not only for the beauty of its form but also for the spectacular dance during which the dancer spins the mask and strikes it against the ground. Marcel Griaule and those who have worked with him have provided several interpretations of the mask since its discovery.

In *Masques dogon* (Griaule, 1938) it was interpreted as a bird with its wings spread (*godi*). This constitutes an explanation for the uninitiated.

Viewed as a human-like figure with two arms pointing in opposite directions, one upwards, the other downwards, the mask represents the god *Amma* displaying creation (one hand showing heaven, the other the earth). The duplication of the two arms evokes the whirling of creation, also symbolized by the dance itself. God is seen as having "danced" creation by spinning the four cardinal points.

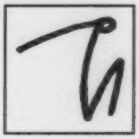
Another interpretation is related to Dogon myth in which an ark descended to earth from the heavens carrying the ancestors of mankind and the prototypes for all animals and vegetation which would inhabit the earth. The impact of this arrival was accompanied by the first rain which formed the first pool of water (symbolically "the descent" represents the breaking of foetal water and the giving of birth). The ark was then "bitten" by a water insect, the *barán kámada* (from the *Népides* family), which is represented at the top of the mask, with the head representing the ark. This rather mysterious chapter of Dogon myth is connected with "the word" of conflict and quarrel; the graphic sign for this word is a representation of the *kànaga* mask.

Finally, the mask conjures up the image of the *yurugu* (white fox) lying on its back, its feet in the air. This animal is considered to have been responsible for all disorder which disturbed creation, dying of thirst as punishment for its misdeeds.

GENEVIÈVE CALAME-GRIAULE.

F

Facility (of the human body for healing)

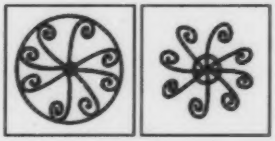


1 The process of recovery (after circumcision); on the road to completion. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.118, No.65].

**Facility*

Family, Kinship

Family, kinship, brotherhood.



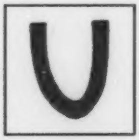
2 Family, brotherhood, kinship. Bamileke, Cameroon.

"One origin, several branches"

➤ GENERATIONS ➤ ORIGIN ➤ SPIRAL ➤ UNION

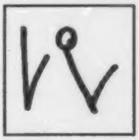
Fertility

Fertility, conception, procreation, maternity, creativity, inventiveness, productivity, prolificacy.



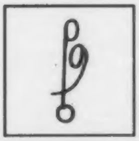
3 Fertility (in general)

**The crescent moon*



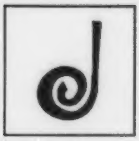
4 Fertility wished for. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.123, No.74].

**Child of the tree*



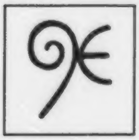
5 Fertility. Sign used during child delivery. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.159, No.186].

**The triplets*

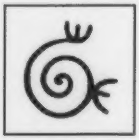


6 Maternity, pregnant woman, pregnancy. Symbol common to several ethnic groups of West Africa (notably the Akan, Baoule, Ashanti and Aboure) for whom it also signifies the world of the Ancestors, the Beyond, the fertility of soil. This symbol is also found in Central Africa, particularly among the populations of the Kasai, Kwilu and Kwango regions.

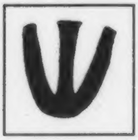
The male and the female

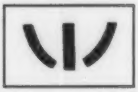


7 Conception, fertility, gestation, pregnancy.



8 The separation of mother and child. Symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

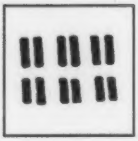




9 Fertility offered by the Ancestors in concord with the Spirits. In Central Africa, this sign represents the imprint of a hen's foot. Among the Baphende, this sign is said to be the "bearer of light" when it is placed on the forehead of a mask.

In other regions, notably in West Africa, it represents the footprint of a bustard.

**Hen's foot*



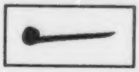
10 Fertilization (of the earth). The sign represents the six types of rain that emanated from the first hermaphroditic rain of creation:
1) soft rain
2) indolent rain
3) violent rain
4) incessant rain
5) lingering rain that resembles women's tears
6) rain that prevents travel

➤ RAIN. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**Primordial rain*

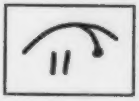
➤ ANCESTORS ➤ WATER ➤ WOMAN ➤ RAIN

Fire



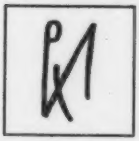
11 Fire. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.27, fig.59].

Fire



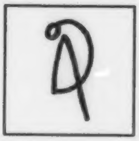
12 Sign of fire. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.62, fig.16A].

**Fire*



13 Fire. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.167, No.220].

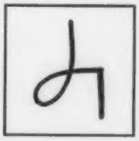
**Here it is, people!*



14 Fire. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.167, No.221].

**A burn*

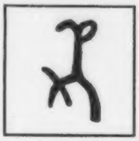
Fish



15 Sign of fish in general; fish with scales, smooth-skinned fish. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.50, fig.6A].

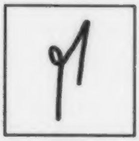
Fish

Fortification, Force



16 Fortification. Sign which serves to put the newborn in contact with the creative force. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.98, No.21].

**Heating up*

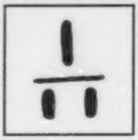


17 Fortification of a newborn. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972].

**Child of the wildcat*

➤ PROTECTION ➤ HEALTH

Foundation

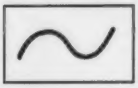


18 Foundation. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.18, fig.25].

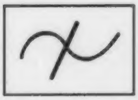
Foundation

Fragility

Fragility, precariousness, discord, divorce, annulment, exclusion, separation.

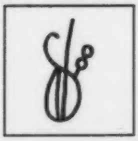


19 Annulment, divorce, exclusion, precariousness, separation.



Fragility, uselessness. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Fragility*

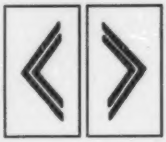


20 Fragility, weakness, representing all that is small and weak. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.164, No.206].

**To diminish*

➤ DISAGREEMENT ➤ MARRIAGE ➤ PRECARIOUSNESS

Frontier, Limit

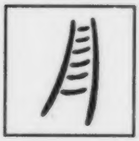


21 Signs conveying the notion of frontier, limit, demarcation. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

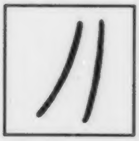
G

Generations

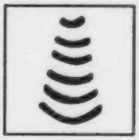
Generations, alternation between life and death, ladder of death.



1 Ladder of generations ➤ FAMILY



a) lineage, descendants



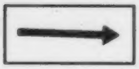
b) the six generations leading back to the forefathers. Central Africa.

**Ladder of generations*

➤ ENERGIES ➤ COMMITMENT ➤ FAMILY ➤ INITIATION ➤ MARRIAGE ➤ DEATH

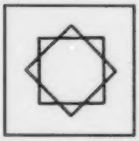
God, the Supreme Being

God, the Supreme Being. Authority, He whose name must not be spoken, Centre, Creator of the Universe, Cosmos, Equilibrium; Incomparable, Infinite, Invisible; Presence and Omnipotence (of God), Power, Strength; Original Source, Universe; The Word, The Primordial Word.

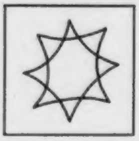


2 Divine breath, life ➤ ENERGY ➤ LIFE. West Africa.

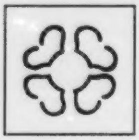
Divine breath



3 God. Among the Akan and other related West African ethnic groups, the eight-pointed star symbolizes the

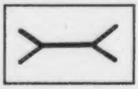


androgyny of God represented by the combination of the male and female cross ➤ STAR. [NIA-BOU 1984].

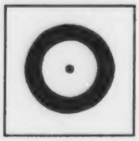


4 God, Creator and Progenitor of all things, who for the Ohendo of Zaire, is centred in man in the lower back, above the kidneys. Sign representing silence over everything that concerns the name of God which, under no circumstances, should be uttered without reason: "Only the insane would violate this law of silence." Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU 1993].

**He whose name must not be uttered*
**The Ineffable*

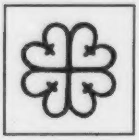


5 **The Incomparable.*
Ohendo, Zaire.

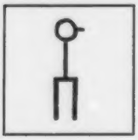


6 The Centre from which the universe emanates, God the Creator. West African.

**Spirit of God*

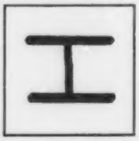


7 **The Presence of God*



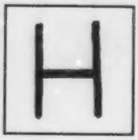
8 *Nommo*, the son of God, the Reorganizer of the world. Dogon, Mali [GRI & DIE 1951: p.14, fig.13].

**Copper* or **God's messenger*



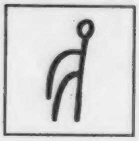
9 The pillar of *Nommo*, son of God, erected on earth to hold up the sky. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.14, fig.14B]

**The pillar of Nommo*



10 The pillar of *Nommo*, the son of God, lowered to earth to spread goodness. Dogon, Mali [GRI & DIE 1951: p.14, fig.14A].

**The pillar of Nommo*

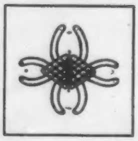
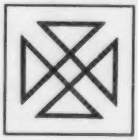
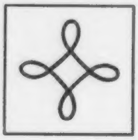
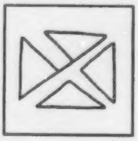
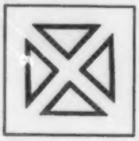


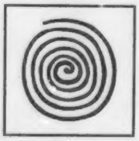
11 God, the Supreme Being. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.148, No.149].

**My great owner*

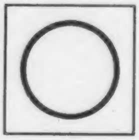
12 The Sacred, the Infinite, the Universe. Valuchazi, Chokwe and Lunda of Angola, Zambia and Zaire. Stylized forms of the same sign found in numerous Central African cultures. [HAM 1951; KUB 1986, 1987].

**The Sacred*

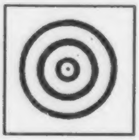








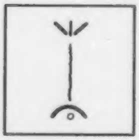
13 The Origin of all things. The First Source, God creating the world ➤ SPIRAL.



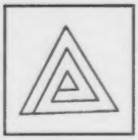
14 God enveloping the world. The Mark of the Beginning, Divine Royalty, the Whole, the Creator of the Universe ➤ CIRCLE.



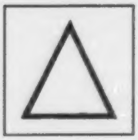
15 With or without a central point: the Word; the Light, God resting after Creation ➤ CIRCLE, CREATION.



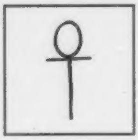
16 God ➤ ANCESTORS.



17 God, the Supreme Being.

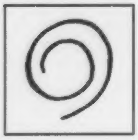


Dignity, Equilibrium, the Hoe of the Beginning, Life (names designating God) ➤ EQUILIBRIUM. Kuba and Luba of Zaire.



18 God resting after Creation. Free before and during Creation, God is considered a captive of his own work once it is completed. ➤ CREATION. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.22, fig.41].

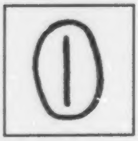
*God's captive or _*God held captive_



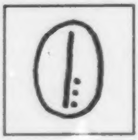
19 The whirling of God prior to his own manifestation. The movement of the wind before Creation. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.18, fig.23B].

*God's fan

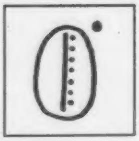
20 Representations of God at various stages of the ceremony of the renewal of the world which lasts sixty years. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.19, fig.35].



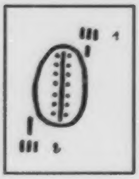
The line inside the oval represents *Amma*, God in the egg of the world before Creation.



The points beside the line each represent a year.



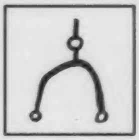
The first seven-year cycle is marked by a large point outside the oval at the upper right, the second cycle, by another large point at the bottom left.



With each successive mark, this sign comes to represent the left hand of God (1) raised towards heaven and God's right hand (2) held out towards the earth.

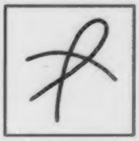
➤ ANCESTORS ➤ CIRCLE ➤ CREATION ➤ EQUILIBRIUM
➤ WORD ➤ SPIRAL

Good Fortune



21 Good fortune, luck, happiness, grace, success, wealth, health. [JES 1979: p.97].

**Good fortune*



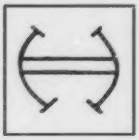
22 Luck and good fortune of the circumcised (and by extension, of all who live in an orderly way). Bambara, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.71, fig.3].

**Light*

➤ BLESSING ➤ DIVINE GIFTS ➤ WEALTH ➤ SUCCESS
➤ HEALTH

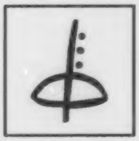
Goodness

Goodness, kind-heartedness, love, affection, charity, compassion, consolation, generosity, sympathy.



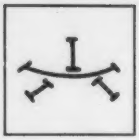
23 Goodness, kind-heartedness, love, affection, charity, generosity. West Africa. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**Heart filled with genuine love*



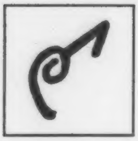
24 Goodness, divine compassion, pity, purity. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.127, No.85].

**Virtuous person* or **Pity*



25 Compassion, consolation, sympathy. Visiting the sick: a bedridden man is visited by his three friends. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**Visiting the sick*

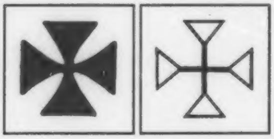


26 Pity, compassion, sympathy. Bambara, Mali, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.40A].

**Pity*

➤ LOVE ➤ OPENING ➤ UNION

Grace

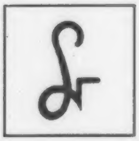


27 Grace, divine gifts; transformation.

**To ward off misfortune*

➤ BLESSING ➤ GOOD FORTUNE ➤ DIVINE GIFTS
➤ SACRED PLACE ➤ WEALTH

Gratefulness, Gratitude



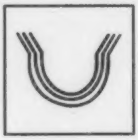
28 Gratefulness, gratitude, thanks. Ohendo, Zaire.

* *"The gesture that must be made"*

➤ WORD

H

Harmony

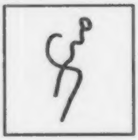


1 Harmony, equilibrium, order. Each of the three lines symbolizes a domain in which the young neophyte is intended to develop a knowledge through initiation (from the outside to the inside): the spiritual, the physical and the emotional ➤ SYMBOL. Ohendo initiation symbol, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Harmony*

➤ BEAUTY ➤ EQUILIBRIUM ➤ HEALTH

Healing



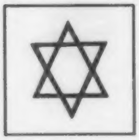
2 Healer, care ➤ WEALTH, HEALTH. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.163, No.203].

**Healer*

➤ EQUILIBRIUM ➤ HARMONY ➤ HEALTH

Health

Health, both physical and "moral"; prosperity.

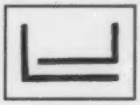


3 Health, happiness, good fortune, life. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979].

**Health*

➤ GOOD FORTUNE ➤ DIVINE GIFTS ➤ HEALING
➤ WEALTH ➤ LIFE

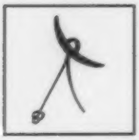
Heritage



4 Heritage, knowledge, wisdom ➤ IGNORANCE, handing down (of knowledge), a person knowing many things or having accumulated much knowledge.

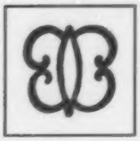
➤ CULTURE ➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ WISDOM

Hope



5 Hope, expectation. Minianka, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

**Hope*

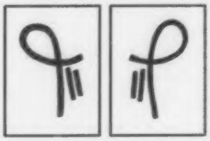


6 Hope, expectation. West Africa.

* *"There is something in paradise."*

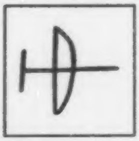
➤ GOD ➤ TRUST IN GOD ➤ IMMORTALITY

Hostility



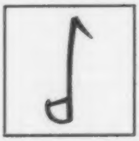
7 Hostility, enemy, hatred, enmity, dissension. Ohendo, Zaire.

**Hostility*



8 Quarrel, conflict, war, hostility. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.148, No.147].

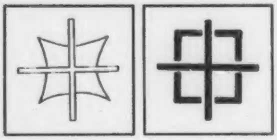
**Quarrel*



9 Enmity (of children). Minianka, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

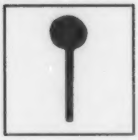
**Enmity among children*

➤ MISTRUST ➤ ENEMY ➤ WICKEDNESS ➤ WORD

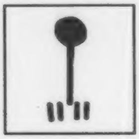


10 Human being, man or woman. Luba, Zaire.

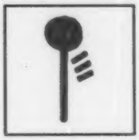
**Star*



11 The human being, master of creation. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.43, fig.1A and B].

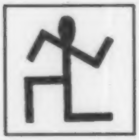


A female person. The number four designates a woman ➤ WOMAN

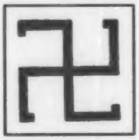


A male person. The number three designates a man ➤ MAN

**The person*

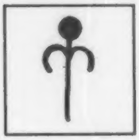


Man of power, chief; strength, masculine and feminine principle at the same time; man and woman in society ➤ WOMAN, MAN, INITIATION. Akan, West Africa. [NIA-BOU 1984].



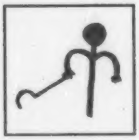
In Central Africa, particularly in the Kasai region, this sign symbolizes a formidable and mysterious power ➤ POWER

**Crossed crocodiles*



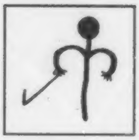
13 Incomplete person, for example, a chief without his subordinates, or a delegate sent to replace someone. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.27, fig.56A].

Incomplete person



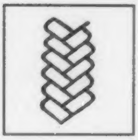
14 A person who thinks before acting, always asking for advice before doing something ➤ MATURITY. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.27, fig.56B].

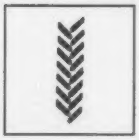
The world opening



15 Complete person (e.g. a chief with all his men, a full group of people) ➤ OPENING. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.27, fig.56C].

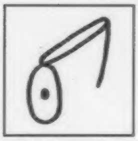
The world opened





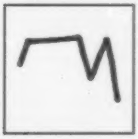
16 In the cosmogony of the Songye, the three-stranded braid* symbolizes Man, the synthesis of three forces (spiritual, physical and emotional). Initiation texts quote the first man in creation as saying *"lupese shi nami Efile, lupese shi nami nyama, lupese shi nami muntu"* ("One part of me is *Efile* (God), one part of me is animal, one part of me is man"). [WAU 1949]. This vision is commonly shared by the other populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**The braid*



17 Nature of the human being (humanity), mortality of men ➤ DEATH. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.158, No.184].

**No one becomes God*

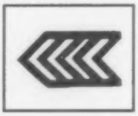


18 The men who today populate the earth. Sign marked on a grave after burial. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.118, No.64].

**People from behind*

➤ MAN ➤ WOMAN ➤ DEATH ➤ LIFE

Human Relationships

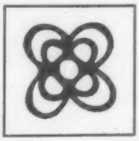


19 Social life, complexity of human relationships, difficulties of life, problems inherent in societal life.

**Discussion without end*

➤ COMPLEXITY ➤ DISORDER ➤ WORLD

Humility

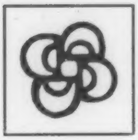


20 Humility, modesty, repentance. West Africa.

* *"Do not boast, do not be arrogant."*

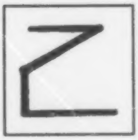
Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy, duplicity, lies.



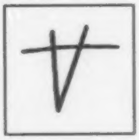
21 Hypocrisy, duplicity, lies. West Africa.

**Truth and deceit look alike.*



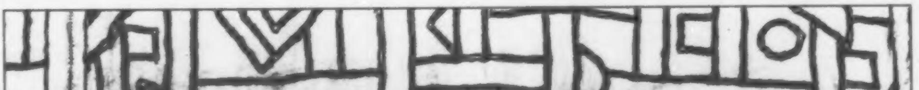
22 Lies, impurity, origin of everything that diminishes the life force. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.166, No.215].

**Hypocrisy*



23 Lies. Bambara, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.40, fig.2G].

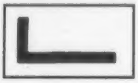
**Lies*



God (G17); Initiation (I12); Wealth (W10)

I

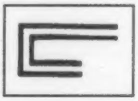
Ignorance



1 Ignorance; ignorant, uninitiated.

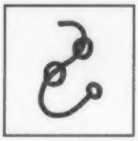
➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ INITIATION

Illness



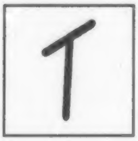
2 Illness, suffering, weakness, powerlessness, incapacity, danger, giving up ➤ POWERLESSNESS. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**Illness*



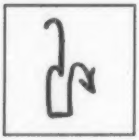
3 Illness, protection from disease. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.110, No.47].

**Illness*



4 Illness. Minianka, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

**Illness*



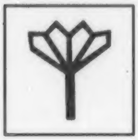
5 Illness, epidemic, avenging force of the Ancestors. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.128, No.88].

**Illness*

➤ EVIL ➤ POWERLESSNESS ➤ BOND ➤ WICKEDNESS

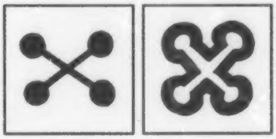
Immortality

Immortality, longevity, durability.



6 Immortality, eternal renewal. Sign of both grief and hope ➤ HOPE. The Ohendo of Zaire mark this sign on a baby's coffin or on the door of a house in which a baby has just died, in hope of seeing the baby reborn. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

* *"We await your return."*

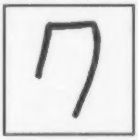


7 Longevity, durability of the human race. The Akan and Ashanti of West Africa.

* *"I will only die when God dies."*

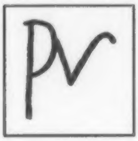
➤ ENERGIES ➤ HOPE ➤ GENERATIONS ➤ DEATH
➤ TRANSMUTATION

Impurity



8 Impurity, state of being unclean, uncircumcised. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.108, No.39].

**Colour of the karité nut*

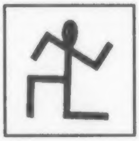


9 Impurity, pride, boastfulness. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.127, No.84].

**Top of the big head*

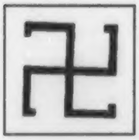
Initiation

Initiation, accomplishment, teaching, knowledge, integration, revelation.



10 The accomplished man evolving in the path of the sun ➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ WOMAN ➤ MAN. West and Central Africa. This sign is the association of masculine and feminine principles.

Among the Akan of the Ivory Coast and Ghana, this sign indicating movement from right to left is masculine and has the value of the number ten; the inverted sign indicating movement from left to right is feminine



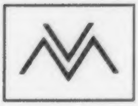
and has the value of the number five. In certain secret societies, the latter is used as a symbol of evil occult forces with the object of causing harm and destruction. [NIA 1984: p.171, No.172].

**Crossed crocodiles*
**Hand of the monkey*
**A meditative person*
**Mystery*

Among the Dogon of Mali, this sign symbolizes worldly things created by God and organized by *Nommo* the Instructor. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.21, fig.37].

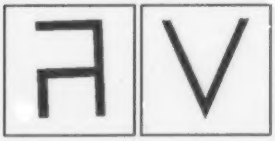
Mark of God or *Instructor's hook*

In the Kasai region of Zaire, this sign symbolizes a formidable and mysterious power.

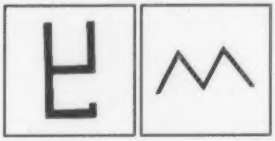


11 Initiation, accomplished man and woman ready for procreation. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU 1992, FAÏ-NZU & NGO]. This sign embodies the masculine and feminine principle of the initiated man and the initiated woman.

**Initiation*



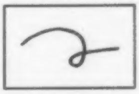
12 The initiated man ➤ HUMAN BEING, MAN, POWERLESSNESS.



13 The initiated woman ➤ HUMAN BEING, WOMAN, POWERLESSNESS.

➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ WOMAN ➤ MAN ➤ GOD

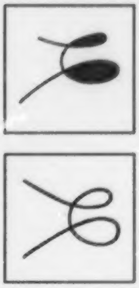
Insects



14 Sign of insects, particularly, the dung-beetle and the spider. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.53, fig.8].

**Son of the wing*

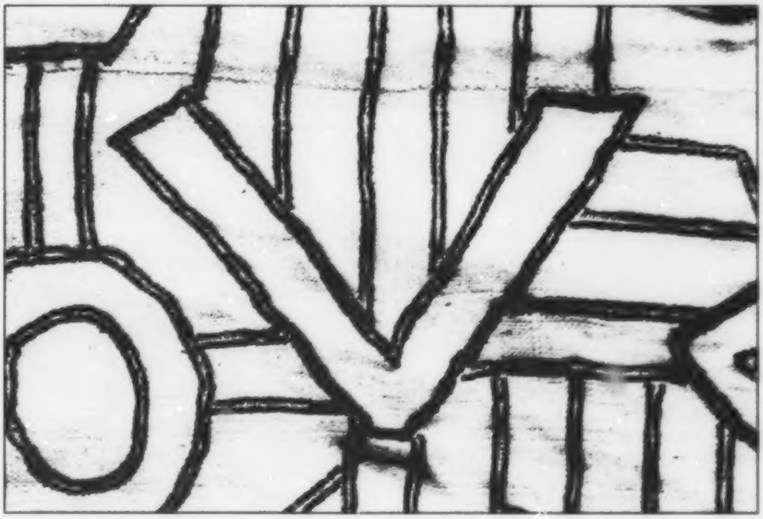
Invincibility



15 **Invincibility, invisibility. Used in the fortification ritual. Ohendo initiation symbols, Zaire. [FAI-NZU & NGO].**

***The invincible*

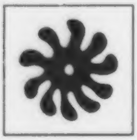
➤ FORTIFICATION ➤ PROTECTION



Man (M9); Initiation (112 B)

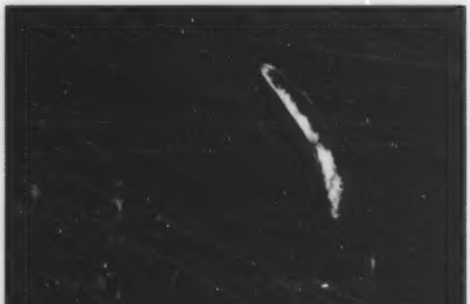
J

Jealousy



1 Jealousy, covetousness, envy ➤ WICKEDNESS, EVIL. West Africa.

➤ HOSTILITY ➤ WICKEDNESS

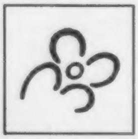


Sacred Mask (Bobo-Fing, Burkina Faso)

The Bobo-Fing consider this mask as the partial materialization of *Dwo*, son of *Wuro*, the Creator. According to myth, when *Wuro* had completed the work of creation, he withdrew leaving mankind his son, *Dwo*, as a sign of alliance between man and himself. The mask is worn in commemoration of this event, those fashioned out of wood being reserved for blacksmiths. The absence of a mouth indicates that it is a masculine mask; its feminine counterpart possesses a mouth. (Le Moal, 1980).

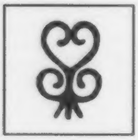
K

Knowledge



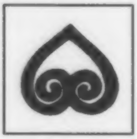
1 Knowledge, intelligence, opening, wisdom ➤ ASPIRATION, OPENING. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

* *"I heard. I'm keeping it."*



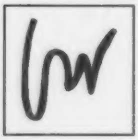
2 Quest for knowledge, seeking ➤ ASPIRATION. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

* *"Go back, look everywhere and take."*



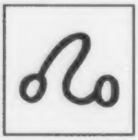
3 Wisdom resulting from past experience ➤ MATURITY. Variation of the preceding symbol. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

* *"Go back, look everywhere and take."*



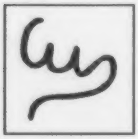
4 Knowledge, science; the filling and fullness of being. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.112, No.51].

**Knowledge*



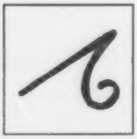
5 Knowledge; knowledge of hidden things, of the unknown. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.112, No.193].

**To write* or **Writing*



6 Knowledge, maturity, ripening of knowledge in a being and the fullness which results from it ➤ MEDITATION, PLENITUDE. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.93, No.15].

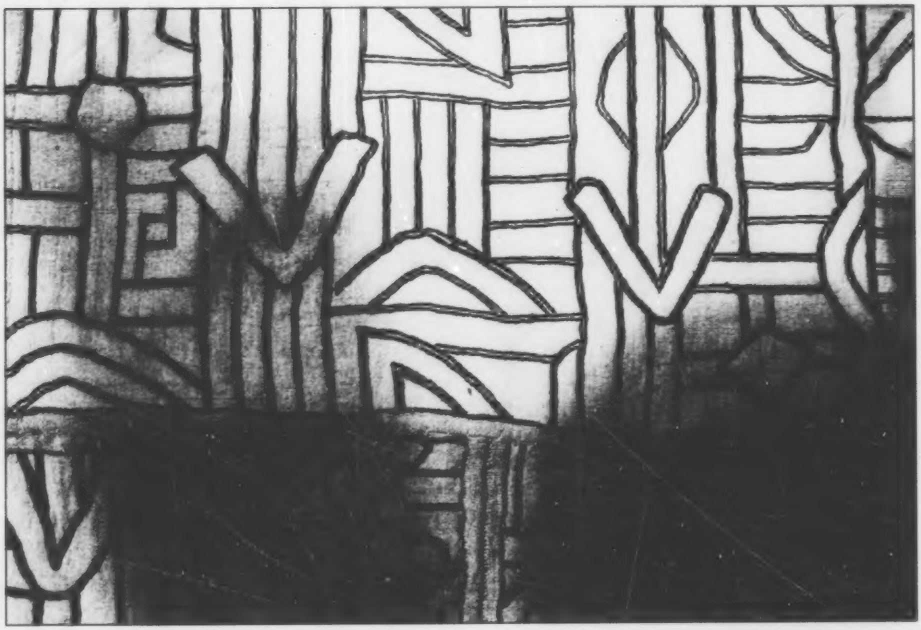
**To fill* or **To satiate*



7 Knowledge, the penetration of received knowledge and learning, the totality of potential knowledge. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.91, No.11].

*To enter

➤ ASPIRATION ➤ DISCERNMENT ➤ HERITAGE
➤ INITIATION ➤ MATURITY ➤ MEDITATION
➤ REVELATION ➤ OPENING

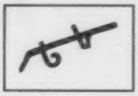


Man (M9); Initiation (I12); Union (U2)

L

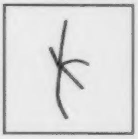
Liberty

Liberty, independence, liberation, safety, solitude.



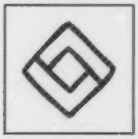
1 Liberation. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.94, No.16].

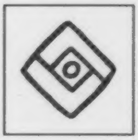
**Leave it!*



2 Independence, solitude, poverty. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.128, No.87].

**Poverty*

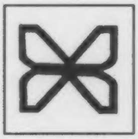




3 Safety, liberation, origin, protection, redemption, life. In the Woot cultural complex (Kuba, Zaire), this symbol evokes the mythical ancestor *Wóót* whose name signifies "he that will liberate". This sign appears in several configurations, together with other signs or in isolation. In certain cases, it also symbolizes political power, genetic origin or social background, and the protection enjoyed by those who remain united ➤ PROTECTION. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

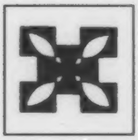
**Safety*

➤ BOND ➤ ORIGIN ➤ PROTECTION



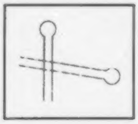
4 Liberty. West Africa.

**To be free*

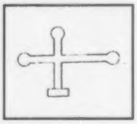


5 Liberty, tolerance. West Africa.

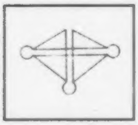
**Smile and let them live.*



6 Stages of life according to the cosmogony of the Kongo of Zaire:
1) birth
2) the blossoming of youth, maturity
[FU-KIA 1969].

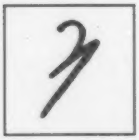


7 Stages of life according to the cosmogony of the Kongo of Zaire:
1) birth
2) the blossoming of youth, maturity
3) death
[BIT 1936; FU-KIA 1969].



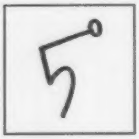
8 Stages of life according to the cosmogony of the Kongo of Zaire:
1) birth
2) death
3) passage through the world of the ancestors
[FU-KIA 1969].

➤ CROSSROADS ➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ WORLD
➤ CARDINAL POINTS



9 The awakening of creatures to life. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p. 90, No. 10].

**Get up!*



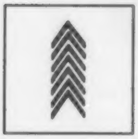
10 Life of beings. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.146, No.140].

**The length of life is in the heavens.*

➤ CROSSROADS ➤ CARDINAL POINTS

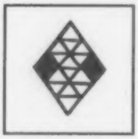
Love

Love between a man and a woman, adultery, conjugal love, engagement, amorous contact.



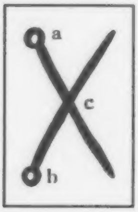
11 Original unity, primitive union between male and female; love between a man and a woman. This sign evokes the proverb "no love, no marriage". West Africa.

**The tail of the crocodile*



12 Male and female essence, union of the numbers three and four. Mystical sign, used particularly by members of the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

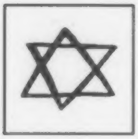
**Union of the numbers three and four*



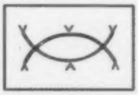
13 Initial unity between humanity and the universe. A couple made up of the first male and female forces that governed the formation of the universe. [JES 1992: p.85; 1992: p.238-239].

a) the first male ancestor of humanity
b) the first female ancestor of humanity
c) the egg of the sky and the earth, the axis of the crossing of paths

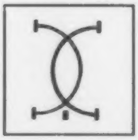
**First Ancestors*



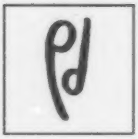
14 Conjugal love, great love between husband and wife; the star represents this ardour ➤ STAR. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.



15 Love between a man and a woman. The sign represents a man and woman sleeping together. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

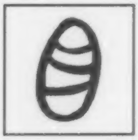


16 Adultery. A man (represented by vertical bar) suggesting to a married woman that they have an intimate relationship. The married couple is represented by the overlapping semicircles. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.



17 Love, amorous contact. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.157, No.179].

**Love*



18 Engagement (of fiancés). The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.157, No.180].

**To put aside for later*

➤ GOODNESS ➤ COMMITMENT ➤ WOMAN ➤ MARRIAGE

Loft Shutters (Dogon)

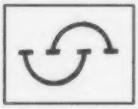
Undoubtedly the loft shutters from the first floor of a *ginna* (large family house) which would explain the absence of a lock. Moreover, the representations of ancestors with which it is ornamented conform well with the context of the family house, home of the patriarch which contains the earthenware used to offer libations to the Ancestors. The figures represented are the eight mythical ancestors, four men and four women, whose marriages gave rise to the first four lineages (hence the four rows of eight figures on the right-hand panel; this also represents the first four generations).

On the left-hand panel, the rows feature only seven (sometimes six) figures. This may possibly be explained by a lack of space, but may also serve to illustrate the number seven, which symbolizes marriage as it represents the sum of 3 (numerical symbol of man) and 4 (numerical symbol of woman). The number eight is a perfect number being composed of 7 (marriage) and 1 (the word). It is also the numerical symbol of twins.

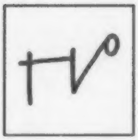
GENEVIÈVE CALAME-GRIAULE.

M

Madness



1 Madness, insanity, folly, disarray, dispersion, overindulgence. West Africa.



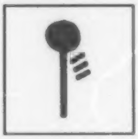
2 Panic-stricken, shocked; all states of psychic possession. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: 169, No.227].

**Hurried*

➤ DISORDER ➤ WANDERING

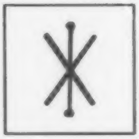
Man, Virility

Man, masculinity, virility.



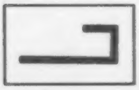
3 Man, masculinity. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.43, fig.1A].

**The person*

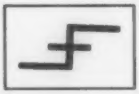


4 Man. Malinke and Bambara of Mali. [CIS 1983: p.138, fig.5a].

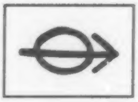
**Man*



5 Man, virility, very strong man.



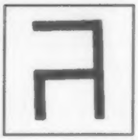
6 Boy.



7 Man. The circle symbolizes the world which the newborn male infant (represented by the arrow) is called upon to traverse in manhood. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951].

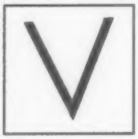
**Male arrow of the world*

➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ WOMAN ➤ INITIATION



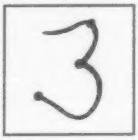
8 Man, virility, masculine principle ➤ WOMAN, INITIATION. West and Central Africa.

**Masculine principle*



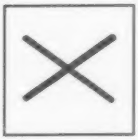
9 Masculine principle, virility, initiate ➤ WOMAN, INITIATION. Ohendo initiation symbol, Zaire.

**Masculine principle*

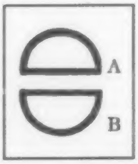


10 Masculinity inherent in the androgyny of beings. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.137, No.115].

**Masculine*



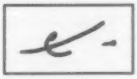
11 Biological symbol for "man" among the Serer of Senegal and Gambia. This sign represents the four cardinal points, the number four being the numerical symbol of man. This sign is also the symbol of mating and marriage ➤ MARRIAGE, and of protection ➤ CIRCLE. [GRA 1990].



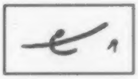
12 **A** and **B**: Virility. These two signs represent the testicles, the symbol of virility aided by the Spirits and the Ancestors. Ohendo, Zaire.
A) the crocodile*
B) the Spirits*

13 Representations of the different stages of a man's evolution. Keita of the Mande, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.45, fig.2].

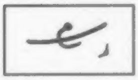
The marks placed beside "the sign of man" indicate the successive stages of his life from birth to death ➤ WOMAN.



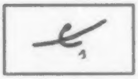
a) infant*



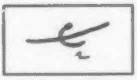
b) uncircumcised, child*



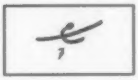
c) circumcised, very young man*



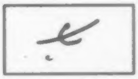
d) young man, mature young man*



e) man, mature man*



f) elderly man, old man*

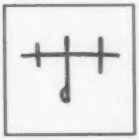


g) impotent old man*

➤ CIRCLE ➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ WOMAN ➤ INITIATION
➤ WORD ➤ CARDINAL POINTS

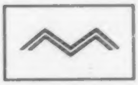
Marriage

Marriage, the life of the couple with its joys and difficulties.



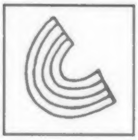
14 Marriage, virginity. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.157, No.178].

**Marriage*



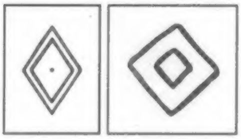
15 Marriage, mating, couple, woman ➤ COMMITMENT, WOMAN. Central Africa. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Like the banana tree*



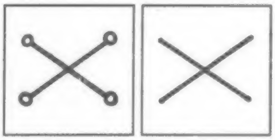
16 Marriage, guarantee, consent, couple, commitment. In the context of marriage, this symbol is scarified onto the front of the thighs of a new young mother, the orientation changing according to the sex of her child. For a boy, the sign will be turned upwards, for a girl, it will be turned downwards (see graphic sign C27) ➤ COMMITMENT, WOMAN. Central Africa.

**The guarantee* or **The ladder of generations*



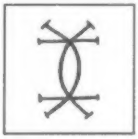
17 Marriage, woman accomplished in marriage, initiated woman, wife. The point in the centre represents the navel ➤ COMMITMENT, WOMAN. Central Africa.

**The support of the navel*
**The guardian of the navel*



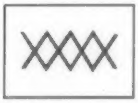
18 Marriage, mating. Central and West Africa.

**Marriage*



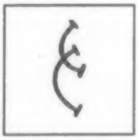
19 Marriage, marital life, wealth. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

* *"Step into the house."*



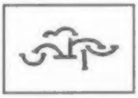
20 Marriage and its difficulties, family problems, problems within the couple. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**Marriage and its difficulties*



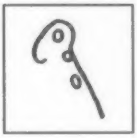
21 Marriage and its difficulties, the separation of the couple — the wife wanting to leave her husband; problems within the couple.

**Each opposing the other*



22 Marital dispute, separation of the couple. The sign represents the person who is at the root of the separation. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**Marital dispute*

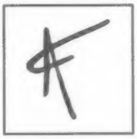


23 Sign used to calm women unhappy in their domestic relationship. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.135, No.106].

**Surprise*

➤ LOVE ➤ COMMITMENT ➤ WOMAN ➤ INITIATION

Mastery



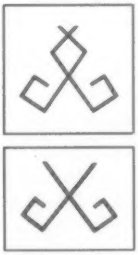
24 Sign symbolizing the mastery of the earth by man who cultivates and purifies it, mastery of situations, evolution. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972].

To walk

➤ COURAGE ➤ EVOLUTION ➤ INITIATION

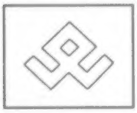
Maturity

Maturity, ripening, wisdom.



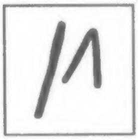
25 Maturity, consciousness, inner searching. For the Kuba, the frog's squatting position evokes the posture taken by women attending a meeting or during childbirth. Woot (Kuba) and Kongo cultural complexes, Zaire.

**Squatting posture of the frog*



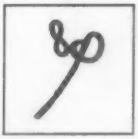
In West Cameroon this sign represents a snake, after which it is named, and symbolizes both maturity and awareness.

The snake



26 Maturity, awareness. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.92, No.12].

**The action of striking*

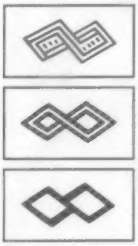


27 Sign of the learned elderly symbolizing maturity, notability. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.104, No.32].

**Great person*

➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ INITIATION ➤ MASTERY
➤ MEDITATION

Mediation



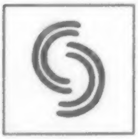
28 Mediator, intermediary, mediation. These signs also incorporate the notions of coordination, of "that which links" and of message or messenger.

**The mediator*

➤ ANCESTORS ➤ COORDINATION ➤ MESSAGE

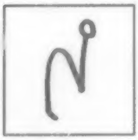
Meditation, Consciousness

Meditation, consciousness, maturity, inner searching, contemplation, reflection, wisdom.



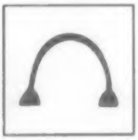
29 Meditation, consciousness, inner searching, wisdom, inner voice. Populations of the Kasai and Bandundu regions, Zaire; the Chokwe of Zaire and Angola.

**A contemplative person*



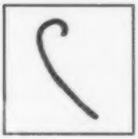
30 Inner life. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.110, No.45].

**Stomach*



31 Consciousness, inner searching, meditation, inner voice. Cameroon.

Double gong

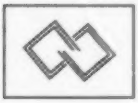


32 Meditation, positive reflection, consciousness, inner voice. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.119, No.67].

**Reflection is good.*

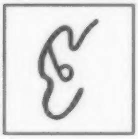
Message, Messenger

Message, messenger, announcement, envoy, delegate.



33 Message, messenger, announcement ➤ COORDINATION, MEDIATION. Woot (Kuba) and Kongo cultural complexes, Zaire.

**Messenger*

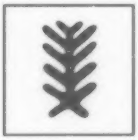


34 Messenger, divine messengers. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.165, No.210].

**Beetles*

➤ MEDIATION ➤ PLENITUDE

Mistrust

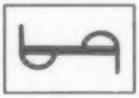


35 Doubt, distrust, suspicion.

**The fern*

➤ DOUBT ➤ HOSTILITY

Moderation



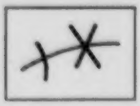
36 Moderation, common sense, wisdom. Ohendo, Zaire.

**Salt*

➤ DISCERNMENT ➤ EQUILIBRIUM ➤ HARMONY

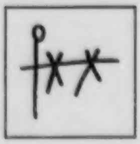
N

Nothingness



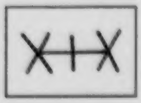
1 Sign of nothingness, that from which the world was created ➤ THINGS, CREATION. Keita and The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.63, fig.17A; DIE & CIS 1972: p.143, No.133].

**Nothing* or **Zero*



2 The initial void, death. This sign also signifies offering, sacrifice, submission. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.117, No.61].

**Offering* or **Sacrifice*



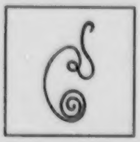
3 The original nothingness from whence emerged the person. Malinke and Bambara of Mali. [CIS 1973, p.133]

**Nothingness*

➤ THINGS ➤ CREATION

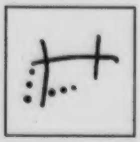
O

Obedience



1 Obedience, conformity, respect, reference to origin, submission. Ohendo initiation symbol, Zaire [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

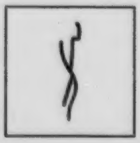
**Obedience*



2 Obedience to authority. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951; DIE & CIS 1972].

**At all times* or **From time immemorial*

Offering, Sacrifice

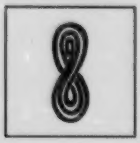


3 Offering, sacrifice. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.149, No.151].

**The sacrifice is today.*

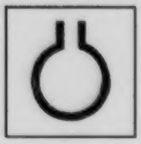
Opening

Opening, evolution, the infinite; knowledge, listening, maturity; quest for knowledge, seeking; renewal.



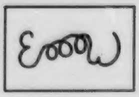
4 Opening. This sign represents the navel which itself symbolizes attachment to the origin, the key, the opening. In the fetal state, man is linked to the original source and to his ancestors through the navel. Populations of the Kasai and Shaba regions, Zaire.

**Navel*



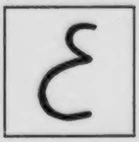
5 The key. The navel is the keyway which opens to the world. It is the opening through which man establishes his first contact with the universe, the centre towards which all forces converge. Populations of the Kasai and Shaba regions, Zaire.

**The navel, the key*



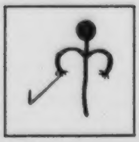
6 Understanding, openness to advice ➤ OBEDIENCE, complexity of understanding. Ohendo, Zaire.

**Pillow, headrest*



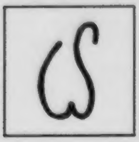
7 Understanding, listening, opening. By extension: man with common sense, who possesses wisdom, who knows how to listen ➤ ANCESTORS. This sign is an element of the preceding sign. Ohendo, Zaire.

**The trained ear*



8 The opening progressively realizing itself; one thing after another ➤ HUMAN BEING. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.27, fig.56B].

The world opening up

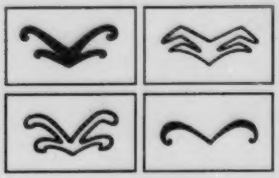


9 Opening, doorway which allows one to enter into a new life. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951; DIE & CIS 1972: p.109, No.42].

**Mouth*

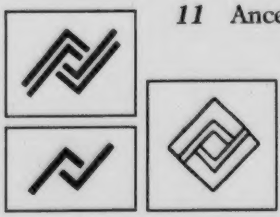
➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ EVOLUTION ➤ INITIATION
➤ MEDITATION ➤ SPIRAL

Origin

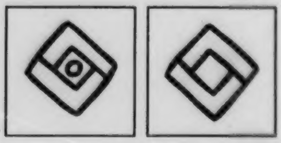


10 Common origin, brotherhood, kinship. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

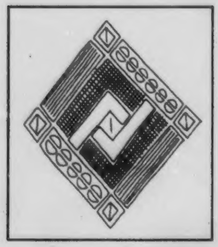
**The source*
**The point of gushing forth*



11 Ancestry, descendants.

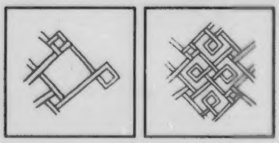


In its most complete form, this sign is drawn inside a square or a diamond shape.

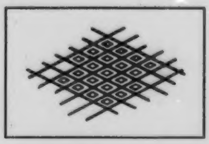


The sign appears in several configurations and is included in the composition of numerous other signs. In this example, it is in the centre, surrounded by the sign of multitude and its two points are turned towards signs depicting cowry shells, symbols of wealth. Bushong cultural complex, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

*Woot

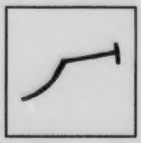


12 A complex sign achieved by the combination of several signs. It symbolizes the interweaving of kinship relations which unite those of common lineage.



When this symbolism also implies protection ➤ PROTECTION, it is depicted as shown here while keeping the same name. Bushong cultural complex, Zaire.

*The king's house



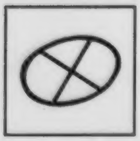
13 The origin, the first outline, the beginning of the word (as creator). The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.85, No.4].

*The male sickle

➤ CAUSE ➤ FAMILY ➤ COUNTRY ➤ PROTECTION
➤ UNION

P

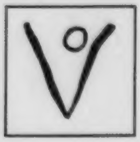
Pardon



1 Pardon, mercy, forgetting. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

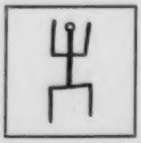
**The well of oblivion*

Path



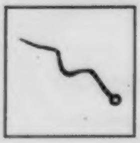
2 Path, route, uprightness. Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

**Path*



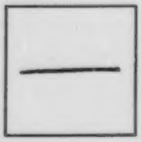
3 Path. Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1992: p.249].

**Path*



4 Path. West Africa.

**Path*

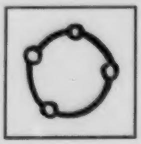


5 Path. Mark indicating the direction of migrations ➤ SPIRAL. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.18, fig.24].

**Path*

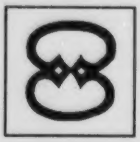
➤ DEPARTURE ➤ SPIRAL

Peace



6 Inner peace, serenity, calm night, calm earth. For the Minianka, this sign represents the path of Venus, a star associated with "the calm earth and nights undisturbed by the scheming of sorcerers". Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1992: p.238].

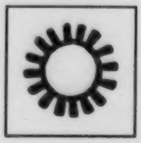
**Calm earth*



7 Place of peace ➤ SACRED PLACE. West Africa.

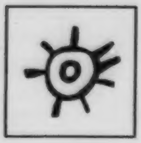
**Place of peace*

Plenitude



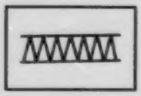
8 Among numerous populations of Central Africa, this sign and its variations are associated with light, its diffusion and unlimited radiance in time and space, the infinite. The Bambala of Zaire call it "bearer of light" and inscribe it on the mask worn by the grand initiation master. Similarly, the Ohendo draw this sign on the apron worn by the initiation master during initiation ceremonies or the investiture of a chief as well as on the mat used in these ceremonies ➤ CIRCLE, GOD, WORD. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

**The radiant sun*



9 Plenitude, completeness, perfection. Plenitude draws on the symbolism of God, the circle and other cosmic symbols ➤ CIRCLE, GOD. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1992: p.97].

**Plenitude*

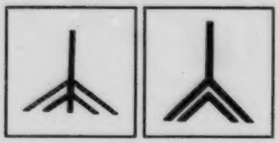


10 Perfection, plenitude. Ohendo and other populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**Nature remodelled*

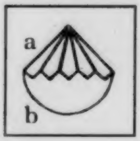
➤ CIRCLE ➤ GOD ➤ WORD

Power, Strength



11 Power, strength ➤ AUTHORITY, CULTURE. Ohendo initiation symbol, Zaire.

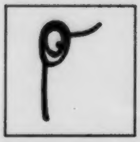
**Strength*



12 Symbol of power and, in particular, of political power among the Ohendo of Zaire ➤ AUTHORITY, ROYALTY. [FAÏ-NZU 1992]. The symbol is composed of two elements constituting two autonomous signs:

a) the Invisible Hand, symbol of divine gifts ➤ DIVINE GIFTS.
b) the mouth of the leopard, symbol of the chief's word.

**The leopard's mouth*

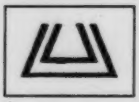


13 Power, strength. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CUS 1972: p.158, No.183].

**Power*

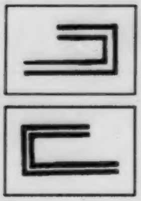
➤ AUTHORITY ➤ CULTURE ➤ POWERLESSNESS
➤ ROYALTY

Powerlessness



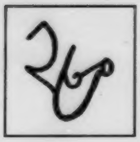
14 Powerlessness, immaturity, ignorance, incapacity, impotence, sickness. Ohendo, Zaire.

**The poisoned foreskin*



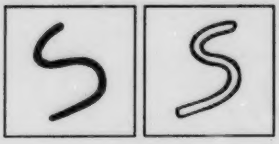
15 Weakness, powerlessness, incompleteness, sickness; ignorant, uninitiated*. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire ➤ IGNORANCE.

**Weakness*



16 Weakness, lack of power, illness. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.132, No.98].

**Disability*

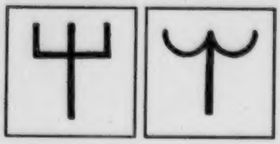


17 Uninitiated*, ignorant woman. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Uninitiated woman*

➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ IGNORANCE ➤ INITIATION ➤ ILLNESS

Prayer

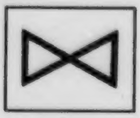


18 Prayer, thanksgiving, praise, supplication, intercession, granting, fulfilment.

**Fulfilment of a wish*

➤ AGREEMENT ➤ MEDIATION ➤ MEDITATION ➤ WORD ➤ GRATEFULNESS

Precariousness (of life)

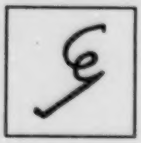


19 Precariousness of life; revival, time and things perpetually renewed. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Precariousness*

➤ ENERGIES ➤ FRAGILITY ➤ DEATH ➤ LIFE

Primacy

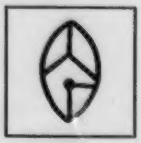


20 The primacy of that which is placed first, cause of the beginning, the start. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.93, No.14].

**First*

➤ ANCESTORS ➤ CAUSE ➤ TWIN-NESS ➤ ORIGIN

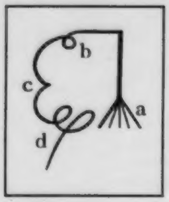
Private Property



21 Private property, individuality. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**Property*

Progression, Promotion



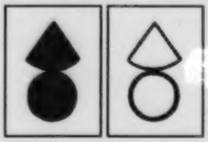
22 Progression, evolution, promotion. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

The sign is composed of four elements:
a) sign of strength ➤ POWER
b) the circle, symbol of perfection ➤ CIRCLE
c) sign of opening, of listening, of understanding ➤ OPENING
d) sign of invincibility ➤ INVINCIBILITY

**Promotion*

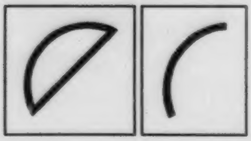
Protection

Protection, self-defence, defence, prudence, refuge.



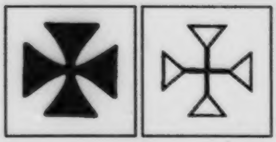
23 Defence, self-defence, protection. Signs (representing the knife used in ritual executions) which prevent the king from becoming the victim of a curse. West African. [NIA-BOU 1984].

**Ritual knife*



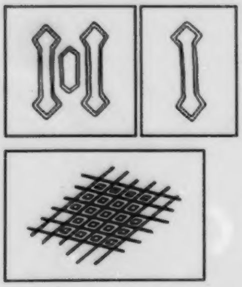
24 Defence, self-defence, protection. Signs composed of an arc. Central Africa, particularly the Kasai regions. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Arc*



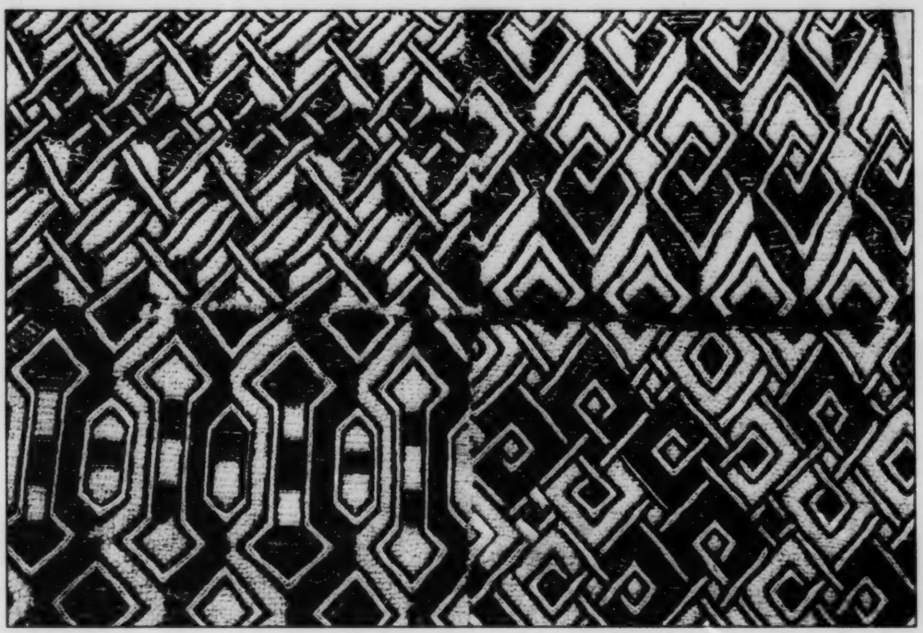
25 Security and safety in the home. West Africa.

**Security*

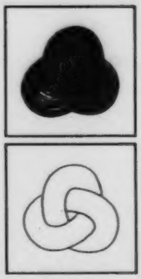


26 Refuge, protection, prudence, wisdom. Signs evoking the patterns of the turtle shell. In many African cosmogonies, the turtle, because of its round shape, symbolizes the uterus which, being the reproduction of the celestial womb, is the ultimate place of refuge. It also symbolizes intelligence, prudence and wisdom — virtues which ensure protection. Several variations of this sign are found in Central and West Africa.

**The turtle*

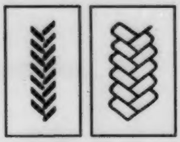


Protection (P26 A, B / P31 A, B); Union (U2); Origin (O12 A, B)



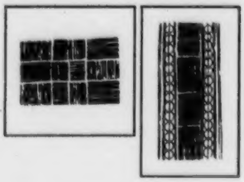
27 For the populations of the Kasai region of Zaire, this highly ambivalent sign symbolizes protection, resentment, grudge. A loved one is enclosed in this knot as protection against the bad influence of others, just as one would do to harm a person one hates. For the Yaka of Zaire, this sign is the symbol of the universe, the infinite, that which has neither beginning nor end ➤ GOD, WORLD.

**The knot*



28 Among the populations of the Kasai region of Zaire, this sign embodies several contradictory meanings: protection; confinement, imprisonment or bond; total man. For the Kuba, the predominant connotation of the symbol of the three-stranded braid is positive confinement for the purpose of protecting. Its shape evokes the patterns of the matting used to join and reinforce posts in the construction of walls or the chevron patterns of houses before they are covered with cob. The house is a refuge. One shuts oneself inside for protection. The sign's name (see below) intentionally contradicts its purpose which is to ward off attention and protect. In the language of the Luba (Zaire), it is called *cípyá*, "that which stands firm" ➤ HUMAN BEING, BOND. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

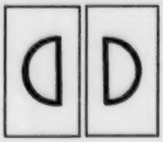
**Disdain* or **Indifference*



29 Refuge, protection, origin and family cohesion ➤ FAMILY, ORIGIN, UNION. Central Africa.

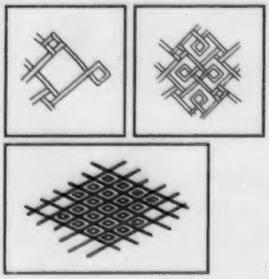
The sign to the right is bordered by signs of the cowry shell, symbol of material wealth.

**The hearth*



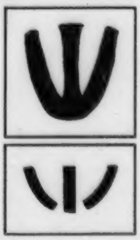
30 Protection, deep hiding place, defence, mystery, secrecy ➤ CIRCLE, THE UNKNOWN, SECRECY. Ohendo, Zaire.

**Secret place*



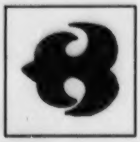
31 Protection enjoyed by those who remain united ➤ ORIGIN, UNION. This sign has many variations. Bushong, Zaire.

**The king's house*



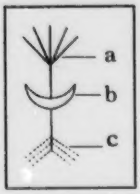
32 Protection. This sign depicts a hen's foot, and also symbolizes fertility ➤ FERTILITY. Several populations of Central and West Africa.

**Hen's foot*



33 God's protection and blessing. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

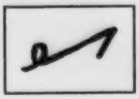
**Hen's foot*



34 Among the Ohendo of Zaire, sign of interdiction that protects. [FAÏ-NZU 1992, NGO].

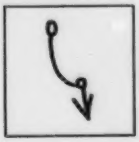
The symbol is composed of the following elements:
a) the Invisible Hand, symbol of divine gifts and the protective hand of God ➤ DIVINE GIFTS
b) the crescent, the nocturnal face of God. Symbol of fertility governed by the Ancestors in concord with the Spirits of nature ➤ FERTILITY
c) the Ancestors and the Spirits of nature that watch over humans ➤ ANCESTORS

**Forbidden*



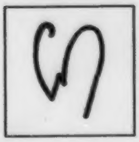
35 Protection (of initiates) from illness caused by epidemics. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.99, No.23].

**To run*



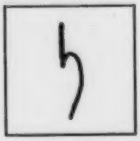
36 Protection (of initiates) from psychological problems following circumcision (male or female). The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.113, No.54].

**The cat caught the moon.*



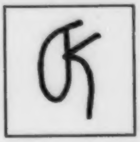
37 Protection (of initiates) against evil forces. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.108, No.41].

**Ear*



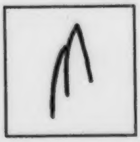
38 Protection of the village against lightning. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.117, No.62].

**The explosion of the heavens is great.*



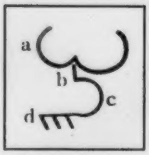
39 Protection against natural catastrophes, prevention of cataclysms. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.117, No.71].

**Leave it there.*



40 Protection of the village against impurities and the stains of sin. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.121, No.70].

**Urine*



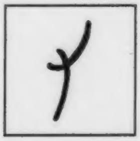
41 Sign indicating that safeguards have been put in place to protect initiation laws and teachings ➤ INITIATION. The sign conveys several other diverse symbolic meanings, including that which is difficult to attain, and also moderate non-conformity (i.e. which does not defy everything but, to a certain extent, respects the social order) ➤ LIBERTY.

The symbol is comprised of four elements:
a) sign representing the spirit of openness, the capacity for listening to advice ➤ OPENING
b) sign indicating a relationship ➤ RELATIONSHIP
c) sign depicting "the broken shell" symbolizing lack of respect or negligence, in brief, any behaviour that does not conform with the education received ➤ DISORDER, MADNESS
The association of signs b) and c) symbolizes the novice who tramples on the initiatory teachings that he has received.
d) "sign of the broom" symbolizing a mysterious power which incarnates the totality of initiation teachings, guarantee of cohesion and prosperity within the community ➤ INITIATION, UNION
Ohendo, Zaire [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Nest of the sparrowhawk*

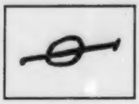
➤ ANCESTORS ➤ CIRCLE ➤ GOD ➤ INITIATION
➤ INVINCIBILITY ➤ LIBERTY ➤ UNION

Purification, Purity



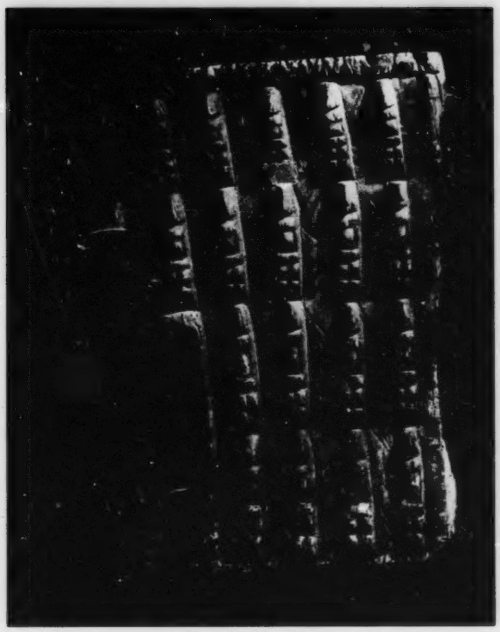
42 Sign of purification in general, for man as for the world. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.92, No.13].

**To cry*



43 Sign of purity. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.84, No.1].

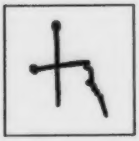
**Gold*



Loft Door (Dogon)

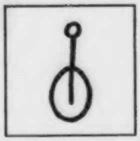
This door is ornamented, like the Dogon loft shutters (See p.80), by four rows of eight figures representing the ancestors of humanity and the first four generations. They fill the entire facade of the door which is fabricated from a single piece of wood. Above the lock, the bolt of which is missing, is a representation of the bird *ógo tògu* ("family of Hogon"). A migratory bird which arrives from the north when peanuts are mature, it announces the time of harvest at the end of the rainy season. The rain, which moves from the East to the West, is represented by the crosses on the box containing the lock, a motif frequently associated with this bird. The Hogon, the bird's namesake, is the religious leader and most senior member of Dogon society.

GENEVIÈVE CALAME-GRIAULE.



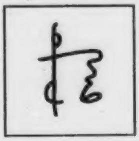
44 Purification of the village. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.120, No.69].

**That which is short*



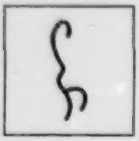
45 Purification and vitalization of the souls of initiates during sacrificial rites. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.137, No.112].

**The alters have arrived.*



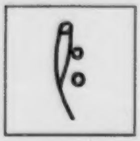
46 Purification of impure beings and things. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.142, No.130].

**Fire*



47 Purification of the harvest. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.145, No.136].

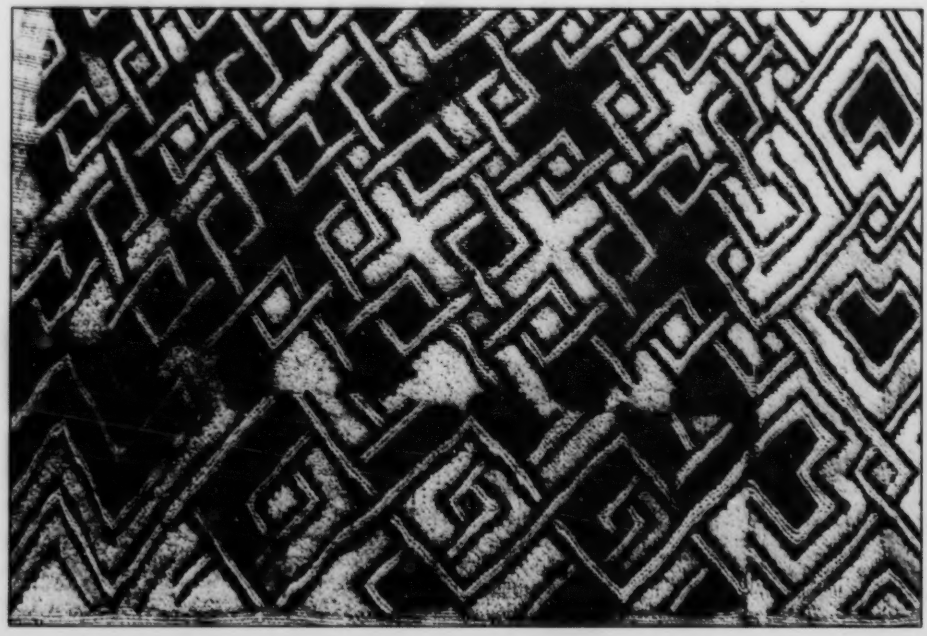
**Ardent and hearty person*



48 Purification by fire. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.172, No.236].

** "Great fire, great."*

➤ BLESSING ➤ PROTECTION

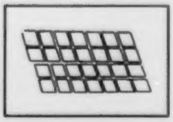


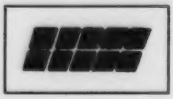
Alliance (A12); Liberty (L3); Origin (O11); Protection (P31)

Q

Quantity, Number

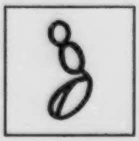
Quantity, number, much, many, several, crowd.





1 Signs that do not have an intrinsic symbolic value but which mark an object with the notion of quantity, multitude, crowd, great number. The small squares may be either solid or blank. Central Africa. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

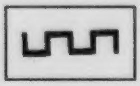
**Multitude*



2 Several, much, many, in great number. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.106, No.36].

**Several*

Questioning

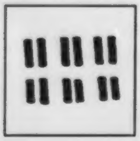


3 Questioning, critical situation.

**Tortuous path*

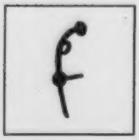
R

Rain



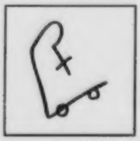
1 Original rain. Populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**Primordial rain*



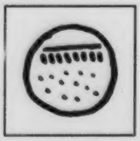
2 Rain. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972, p.116: 60].

**Water from the sky*



3 Sign used in rituals to obtain rain. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972, p.134: 105].

**Water*



4 Rain passing through clouds before falling. The sign is composed of the following elements:

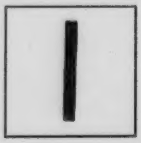
- the circle (the sky)
- the horizontal bar (the clouds)
- the vertical bars (the wind)
- the points (the rain drops)

Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951, p.17; fig.19].

**The pattern of the rain*

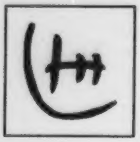
➤ WATER ➤ FERTILITY ➤ DROUGHT

Relation



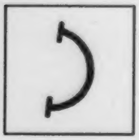
5 Sign used to express different types of relationships: interrelation, reciprocity, coordination, contact between two or more symbols or elements of symbols.

Revelation



6 Sign of the *calao*, celestial bird. According to Minianka creation myth, it brought sign-symbols to man on earth, and revealed their meaning ➤ WORD. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

*The head of the calao

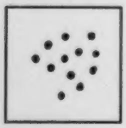


7 Revelation. The sign of *Idiok*, the baboon which, according to Nsibidi traditions, revealed to all men the secrets of Nsibidi signs together with the knowledge of remedies. [L'AFRIQUE ET LA LETTRE].

*Idiok

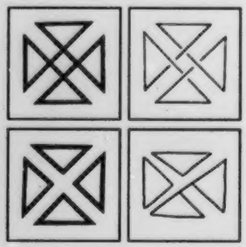
➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ INITATION ➤ MATURITY ➤ WORD

Rocks, Stones



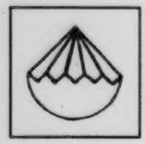
8 The Dogon represent rocks and stones with twelve small points. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.16, fig.17 and p.17, fig.21].

Royalty



9 Royalty, political power. Kuba, Zaire ➤ GOD, POWER. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

*The lion's paw print

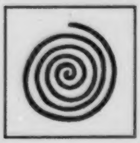


10 Sign of the leopard. Symbol of power in general and among the Ohendo of Zaire in particular, symbol of political power ➤ POWER. [FAÏ-NZU 1992]. (See graphic sign P12)

*The leopard's mouth

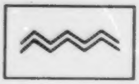
Kpeli-yëhë Mask (Senufo)

Senufo populations occupy an extended territory in West Africa covering parts of the Ivory Coast, Mali and Burkina Faso. *Kpeli-yëhë* masks are a representation of the primordial female ancestor. They are worn in specific social contexts, the most important of which are related to initiation and funerals. The *poro* (or *lô*) is an esoteric institution composed of all the adult males in the community including young men who have successfully passed certain tests. As in most "male-dominated" societies, the *poro* upholds tradition and ensures the transmission of myth. It also controls the social aspect of ancestor worship. At the end of the second of the three stages of *poro* initiation, a man wearing a *kpeli-yëhë* mask dances to mark the completion of this stage which symbolizes death and symbolic rebirth. The mask is also worn during the funeral of a *poro* member. As shown here, the mask face is covered with abstract sign-symbols crowned by a bird symbolizing the blacksmith. (Bastin, 1984).



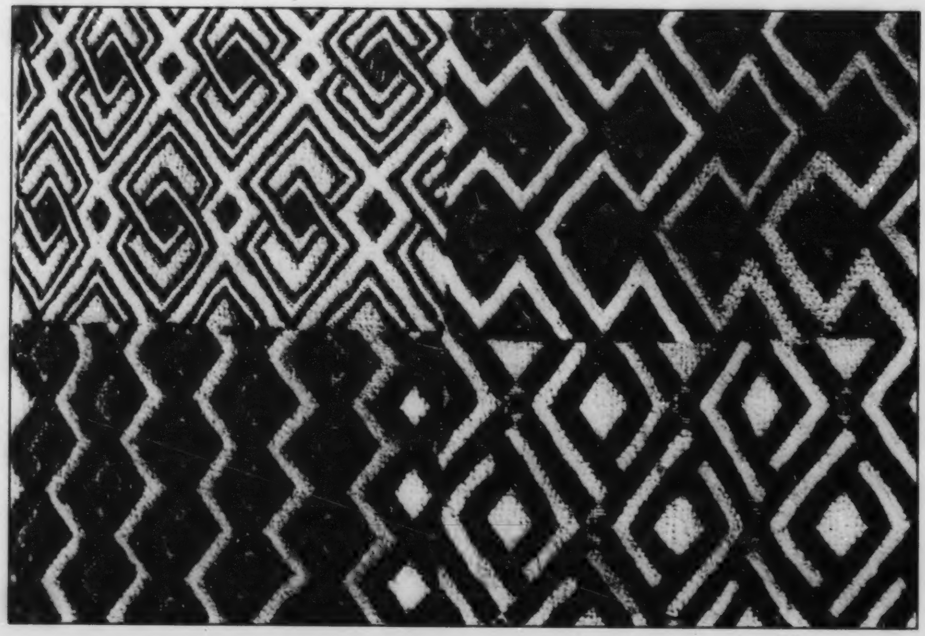
11 Royalty and the priesthood. Among South-East African populations (notably the Venda, Kalanga, Ruzwi and Lemba) the spiral, like the chevron pattern, represents a python which in turn symbolizes the Creator. The spiral symbolizes royalty in its cosmic role as "giver of life" ➤ GOD, SPIRAL. [ROU-EBE 1982].

**Royalty*



12 In the Kalanga/Karanga/Venda cultural complex of South-East Africa, the double chevron symbolizes the royal couple, composed of the King* and his sister*. [ROU-EBE 1982].

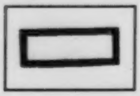
➤ AUTHORITY ➤ CIRCLE ➤ GOD ➤ POWER ➤ SPIRAL



Liberty (L3); Origin (O12); Protection (P31); Union (U2)

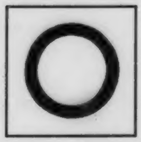
S

Sacred Place



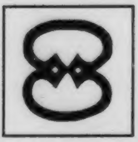
1 Celestial place, acts of grace of all kinds awaited or received from the Invisible Hand ➤ DIVINE GIFTS. Places in the chief 's court and in girls' initiation camps regarded as sacred and which are forbidden to the uninitiated. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Sacred place*



2 Heaven. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.17, fig.20].

**Heaven*



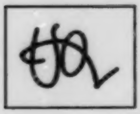
3 Place of peace ➤ PEACE. West Africa.

**Place of peace*

➤ CIRCLE

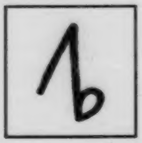
Secrecy

A secret or confidence, discretion; the unknown, mystery, what is hidden.



4 Secret, confidence. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.171, No.233].

**Secret*

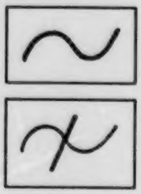


5 Secret, marriage secret, chastity. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.107, No.38].

**Black*

➤ THE UNKNOWN ➤ WORD

Separation

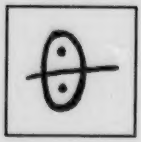


6 Annulment, divorce, exclusion, precariousness.

Fragility, uselessness. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

** Fragility*

➤ FRAGILITY

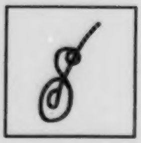


7 Separation, divergence of opinion ➤ FRAGILITY. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.140, No.123].

**Separation*

➤ DISAGREEMENT ➤ FRAGILITY ➤ PRECARIOUSNESS

Sharing

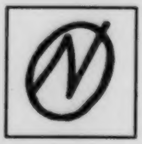


8 Sharing, distribution. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.164, No.207].

**One, one*

➤ UNION

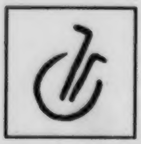
Silver



9 Silver (metal); first audible word, spirit of the word ➤ WORD. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.87, No.7].

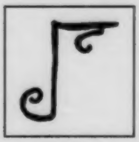
**Silver*

Smallness



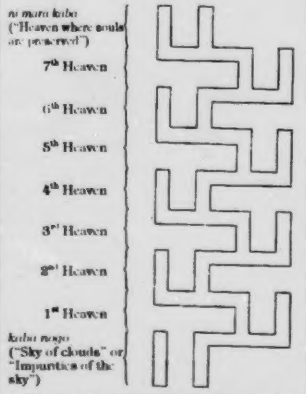
10 Smallness. Bambara, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.40, fig.I].

**Smallness*



11 Soul, individual spiritual entity. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

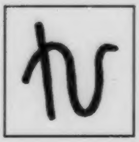
**The soul*


ni mara kaba
("Heaven where souls are preserved")
7th Heaven
6th Heaven
5th Heaven
4th Heaven
3rd Heaven
2nd Heaven
1st Heaven
kaba nogo
("Sky of clouds" or "Impurities of the sky")

The Maze of the *banya ngolo* and the Ascension of the Souls (CIS 1983)

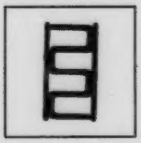
12 Ascension of souls. Forty days after death, the Malinke and the Bambara of Mali commence a rite which permits the soul of the deceased to begin its return to "the heaven where souls are preserved". This is accomplished by retracing the *banya ngolo* — "the genealogy of the universe" — which leads to "divine heaven" where the soul will live for eternity. Pure souls arrive quickly. Less pure souls, on the other hand, only reach this heaven after passing through all the stages. This schema is not a sign in itself, but may serve to support several different signs and contribute to their symbolism in different circumstances. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.207; CIS 1973: p.176].

**The maze of the banya ngolo*



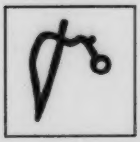
13 Ascension of souls, gratitude (to a deceased). The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.124, No.76].

**Ascent*



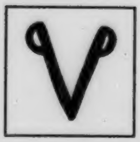
14 Journey of a soul that has not yet arrived. Ohendo, Zaire.

**Journey of the soul*



15 Energy of the soul, vital force. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.133, No.101].

**The charm of heaven*

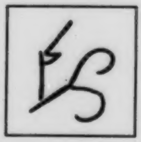


16 Movement of the souls of all things. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: 134, No.102].

**Wind*

➤ ANCESTORS ➤ DEATH ➤ WORD

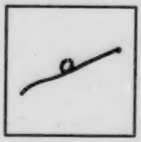
Space



17 Sign of space, visible, invisible or secret. Keita of the Mande, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.60, fig.13A].

**Belly of the secret*

Speed



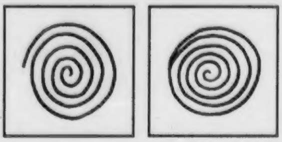
18 Speed, rapidness. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.97, No.20].

**Speed*

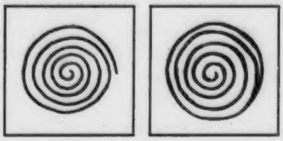
Spiral

Cosmic sign witnessed in all of sub-Saharan Africa with a symbolism covering a wide conceptual field: beginning, continuity, creation, dynamism, evolution/regression, infinity, lifeline, law, motion (to put into), order, first origin ➤ CREATION, GOD. Among the ethnic groups of South-East Africa such as the Venda and Kalanga as well as many others, the spiral symbolizes the uncoiling of the mythical python which itself is the symbol of the Creator [ROU-EBE 1982]. Among certain populations of Central Africa, for example, those of the Kasai region of Zaire, the spiral may equally represent the earth, the moon or the sun. It symbolizes the cyclical movement of life ➤ CREATION, LIFE. The Songye of the same region and populations of West Africa consider it, among other things, as a symbol of authority and the exercising of power. The spiral draws on much of the symbolism of concentric circles ➤ CIRCLE. It is the Word of the Organizing Spirit which orchestrates completeness ➤ GOD. It is the symbol of evolution from the point of origin whose dynamic is manifested in uninterrupted and unending development. In certain contexts, the spiral acquires additional connotations according to whether it moves in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction and whether it is open or closed ➤ EVOLUTION. [FAÏ-NZU 1992].

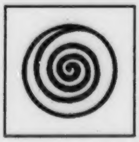
19 For particular ethnic groups, the direction of the spiral carries other connotations:



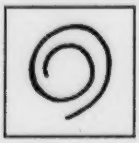
Clockwise (from the outside inwards): negative evolution, regression, fleeing from what has been done ➤ EVOLUTION



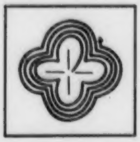
Counter-clockwise (from the outside inwards): positive evolution, progress, growth, progression ➤ ABUNDANCE, EVOLUTION



20 Accomplishment, perfection ➤ PLENITUDE



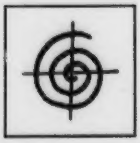
21 The whirling of God prior to his own manifestation ➤ GOD. The movement of the wind before Creation. Dogon, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951].



22 The cruciform spiral with central crossroads. Symbol of the universe in its uninterrupted evolution. The continuous line which starts at the centre (the First Origin) and carries on to infinity, symbolizes that everything in the universe is linked, that nothing is ever finished, that no creature can function in total isolation ➤ UNION.

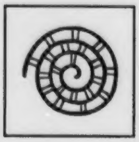
The central cross represents the crossroads, symbol of mutation, choice, decisions and decisive encounters, of all that is linked to the human condition ➤ CROSSROADS, EVOLUTION. Luba of Zaire. [MFU 1984].

**The village hen*



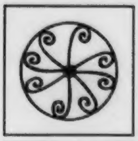
23 Migration. For the Kongo of Zaire, this sign represents the shell* and symbolizes the migration of the Kongo people. It is drawn from the outside inwards ➤ PATH, DEPARTURE. [FU-KIA 1969].

**Migration*



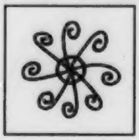
24 The mythical python symbolizing God in movement during Creation; the cyclical movement of life ➤ CREATION. Luba, Zaire.

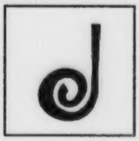
**The water snake*



25 Family, brotherhood, kinship ➤ FAMILY. Bamileke, Cameroon.

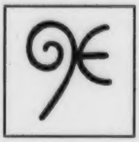
"A single origin, several branches"



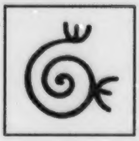


26 Maternity, pregnancy; pregnant woman. Symbol common to several ethnic groups of West Africa (notably the Akan, Baoule, Ashanti and Aboure) for whom it also signifies the ancestral world, the afterlife, the fertility of the soil. It is also found in Central Africa, particularly among certain populations of the Kasai, Kwilu and Kwango regions ➤ FERTILITY.

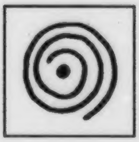
The male and the female



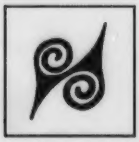
27 Conception, fertility, gestation, pregnancy ➤ FERTILITY.



28 The separation of mother and child ➤ FERTILITY. Symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

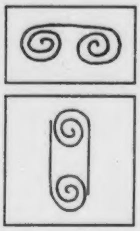


29 Venus at its Zenith. The central point represents the star itself and the spiral pattern traces its path in the sky ➤ CREATION. Dogon, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.11, fig.5B].



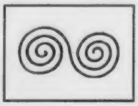
30 Courage, bravery, moral fortitude, perseverance ➤ COURAGE. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

** "Stand firm!"*



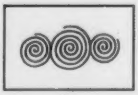
31 Courage, bravery, moral fortitude, perseverance ➤ COURAGE. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

* *"Stand firm!"*



32 The creation of the universe, put into initial motion by an androgynous primordial being. Populations of West Africa; the Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi ➤ CREATION.

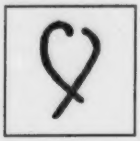
* *"A masculine-feminine God (God-Goddess) proceeding with creation"*



33 Juxtaposition of three spirals. Dynamic symbol of the creation of the universe. God creating, assisted by the sun and the moon his diurnal (male) and nocturnal (female) extensions. Static symbol ➤ CREATION.

➤ ABUNDANCE ➤ CIRCLE ➤ COURAGE ➤ CREATION ➤ DEPARTURE ➤ GOD ➤ EVOLUTION ➤ WORLD ➤ WORD ➤ PLENITUDE

Stability

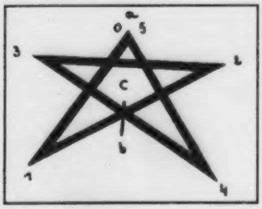


34 Stability, culture, presence. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.126, No.82].

**I am not leaving now.*

➤ CIRCLE ➤ CULTURE ➤ EQUILIBRIUM ➤ INITIATION

Star



35 Five-pointed star

The star of the Serer universe. A sign common to several West African cultures (notably the Maninke, Serer and Peul). A symbol of the universe ➤ WORLD, comprising:

a) *Roog*, the Supreme Being, source of vital energies

b) the axis of the world, place of man's regeneration
c) the centre of the star (universe), space representing security and protection.

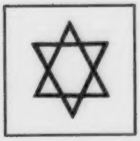
The symbolism of the Star of the Universe lies equally in its outline, which follows a precise path taught during initiation. It is drawn in five movements starting from the summit (0) and returning to it (5) thereby completing the star. The four cardinal points are indicated by points 1, 2, 3 and 4 ➤ CARDINAL POINTS. The crossing of lines 1-2 and 3-4 pinpoints the axis of the world, through which all energies pass. Point 0/5 is the point of departure and conclusion, the origin and the end, The Supreme Being ➤ INITIATION.

As its name in Serer indicates, the Star of the Universe fulfils the function of provider. For the Serer it is a sign of cultural identification. To this day, Serer who do not know how to write, sign official documents with this star. [GRA 1990].

The Star of the Universe is also a symbol of good fortune and destiny. Each individual possesses a celestial star and his luck depends on its brightness. [GRA 1990].

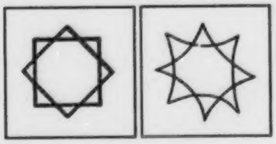
**Provisions for a journey (into the afterlife)*

In the graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities of Mali, the five-pointed star symbolizes the chief 's dominion, the kingdom, the territory ➤ COUNTRY. [JES 1979: p.97].



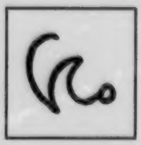
36 Six-pointed star
Health, energy, strength, life ➤ ENERGIES, LIFE. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities of Mali ➤ HEALTH. [JES 1979].

In the Nsibidi graphic system of the Egbo fraternity, the six-pointed star represents conjugal love ➤ LOVE. The Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.



37 Eight-pointed star
God. Among the Akan and other related ethnic groups of West Africa, the eight-pointed star symbolizes the androgyny of God represented by the combination of the male and female cross ➤ GOD. [NIA-BOU 1984].

Success

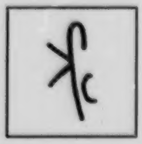


38 Success, power; to achieve, to attain a goal ➤ AUTHORITY, POWER. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.110, No.46].

**To reach*

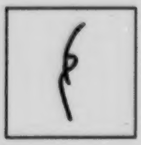
➤ BLESSING ➤ GOOD FORTUNE ➤ DOWNFALL ➤ DIVINE GIFTS ➤ WEALTH

Sun



39 Sun. The setting sun or the West, sign of intuition and clairvoyance ➤ DISCERNMENT. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.104, No.30].

**Sunset*

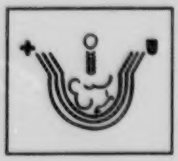


40 The rising sun or the East. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.104, No.31].

**Sunrise*

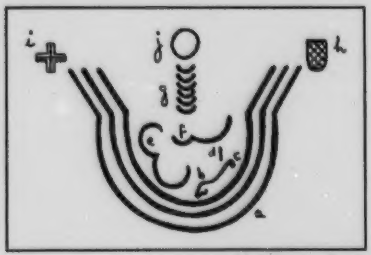
➤ DISCERNMENT ➤ WORD

Symbol



41 Symbol of the symbol. An amalgamation of several signs, this symbol encodes two types of information. The first relates to the maturation of the individual beginning with the refinement of the senses: smell, sight (discernment), hearing (understanding, comprehension), taste (word, speech, language); the second relates to the function of initiation to train and educate ➤ EQUILIBRIUM, HARMONY, INITIATION. The sign is composed of ten elements:

a) symbol of harmony ➤ HARMONY
b) sign representing the nose and symbolizing the sense of smell
c) sign representing the head and symbolizing intelligence, wisdom, maturity and human vitality ➤ KNOWLEDGE, MATURITY



d) sign representing the closed eye and symbolizing blindness, lack of vision or poor sight ➤ IGNORANCE

e) sign representing the ear, symbol of attention, listening and comprehension ➤ OPENING

f) sign representing the mouth, symbol of the word, language and speech ➤ WORD

g) sign representing the footprint, symbol of walking (Each footprint corresponds to progressive stages of initiation. It symbolizes the path, the direction in which the initiate must follow.) ➤ PATH, EVOLUTION

h) sign representing the winnowing basket, symbol of spiritual nourishment, receptiveness, openness. (It is also the symbol of he who grows in intelligence, wisdom and knowledge of life.) ➤ KNOWLEDGE, MATURITY, OPENING

i) the crossing of paths, symbol of the convergence of differences, intercession, mediation, and of the initiate ➤ CROSSROADS, MEDIATION

j) the circle, symbol of perfection ➤ CIRCLE, PLENITUDE

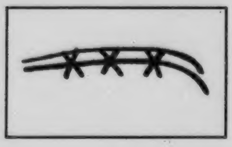
Ohendo initiation symbol, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**The great symbol*

➤ CROSSROADS ➤ CIRCLE ➤ PATH ➤ KNOWLEDGE ➤ EVOLUTION ➤ HARMONY ➤ IGNORANCE ➤ MATURITY ➤ MEDIATION ➤ WORD

T

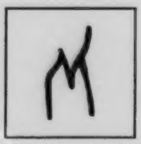
Things



1 The sign of all things, visible and invisible, contained by the universe ➤ NOTHINGNESS. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.63, fig.17B].

**The triple zero*

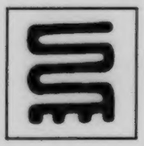
Thought



2 Thought. Bozo and The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.101, No.25].

**Thought*

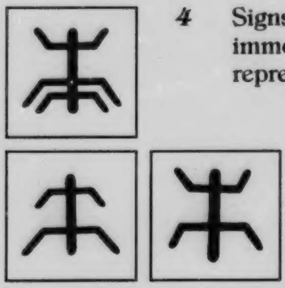
Transformation of Being



3 Transformation of being; transformation. West Africa.

**The transformation of being*

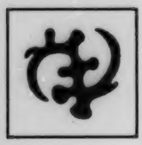
Transmutation



4 Signs signifying the notions of transmutation, immortality, metamorphosis, vitality. These signs represent reptiles, such as the lizard and the snake, which for the most part periodically shed their skins. The symbolism of these animals is linked to the role they play in the creation myths of their culture of origin. They also symbolize life, renewal, transformation or change. Numerous variations of this sign exist. Populations of the Kasai and Shaba regions of Zaire.

➤ EVOLUTION ➤ GENERATIONS

Trust in God

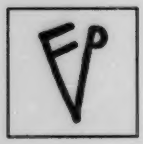


5 Trust in God, faith. Mystical symbol common to many ethnic groups of West Africa.

* *"I fear no one"*

➤ GOD

Truth

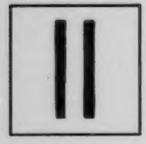


6 Truth, that which is truthful. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.170, No.228].

**Keeper of the truth*

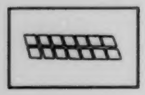
"Twin-ness"[1]

Twin-ness, couple, duality, parity, first ancestors.



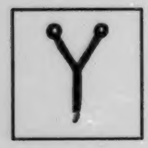
7 Twin-ness, first celestial ancestors, first twins ➤ ALLIANCE. Ohendo initiation symbol, also present in other ethnic groups of Zaire.

**The sower*



8 Twin-ness, first twins in the myth of *Woot* among the Kuba of Zaire. The myth describes how an incestuous act between *Woot*, (the first king of all the peoples that constitute the Woot cultural complex) and his twin sister *Mweel* introduced misfortune into the world ➤ QUANTITY.

**Twins*

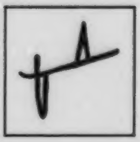


9 Perfect twin-ness, indivisible sexual union, first twins on earth. Graphic systems of certain initiation societies and divination fraternities of West Africa.

**Two bodies merged into one*

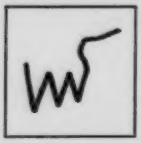
---

[1] The term "twin-ness" is used here following the usage in *Peoples of Africa* (Marshall Cavendish, 1978 p. 65) to equate the notion expressed by the French "gémellité". *ed.*



10 Twins, the formation of Heaven and Earth. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.94, No.16].

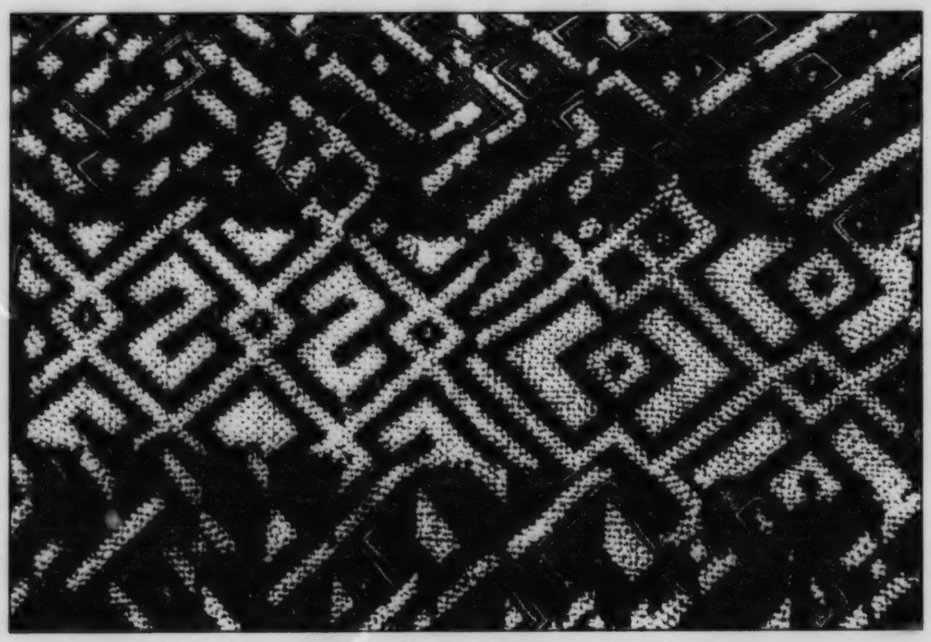
**Twins*



11 Twin-ness (duality) present in initiates. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.109, No.43].

**Forehead*

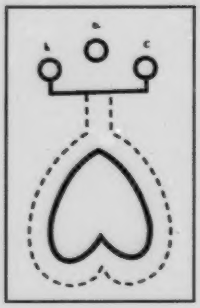
➤ ALLIANCE ➤ ANCESTORS ➤ INITIATION ➤ DAY/NIGHT ➤ UNION



Coordination (C30); Mediation (M28); Message (M33)

U

Union, Unity, Solidarity

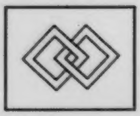


1 Communion. In initiation texts of the Ohendo of Zaire, this sign symbolizes the communion of beings*, accord, faith in the Ancestors, unity and union. [FAÏ-NZU 1992; NGO].

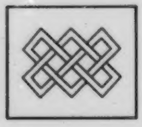
The top of the symbol is composed of three elements:
a) God the Creator
b) the Cosmos and all it contains
c) the Spirits and the Ancestors

The inverted heart shape in the centre represents a bag containing all the members of the community. The broken line represents the Spirits and the Ancestors enveloping and protecting the community.

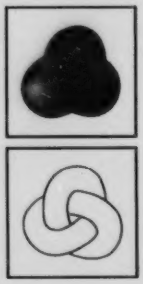
**The bag*



2 The original union of man. Populations of Central Africa.

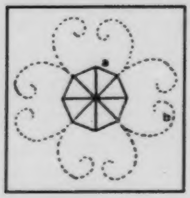


3 The original union of creatures: "Everything in the universe is connected." ➤ GOD, WORLD. Several populations of Central Africa.



4 Universe, the infinite. Union of the universe and its creatures: "Everything in the universe is intertwined, connected" ➤ GOD, BOND, WORLD, PROTECTION. Yaka of Zaire.

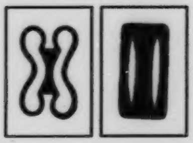
**The knot*



5 Mutual aid, solidarity among members of the same community, between men, and with the dead. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU 1992, NGO].

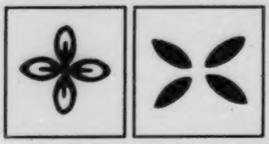
This symbol is composed of two autonomous elements:
a) an octagon representing the union of all those who, while remaining quite distinct, recognize their common origin
b) the four "ears of the Ancestors" symbolizing the availability of the Ancestors and the Spirits and their aid to the living ➤ ANCESTORS.

* *Helping one another*



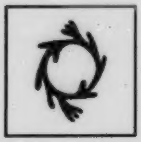
6 Solidarity, communion of beings, agreement, union, unity among men. West Africa.

* *"We are linked in life as in death."*



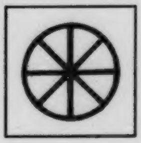
7 Solidarity, unity among men.

* *"Let us live together."*



8 Solidarity, unity among men.

* *"Bite not one another."*

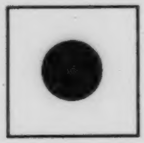


9 Union, unity, strength, all in the same direction, common goal. West Africa.

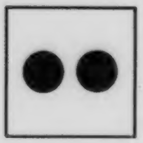
Common goal

➤ AGREEMENT ➤ AID ➤ ALLIANCE ➤ COMMUNICATION ➤ FAMILY ➤ BOND ➤ SHARING ➤ RELATION

The Unknown, Discretion



10 The Unknown, mystery, discretion.

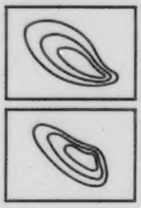


The Unknown, change. Together, one dot symbolizes a thing or state which is known that one leaves to move towards the Unknown, the other dot symbolizes the thing or state, still unknown, at the point of arrival. Ohendo, Zaire. [FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**The Unknown*

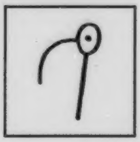
V

Variety



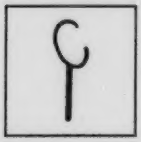
1 Sign of variety, diversity and the differentiation of things ➤ CIRCLE, DIFFERENCE. West Africa.

Vegetation



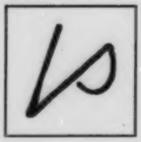
2 Sign of trees whose roots, bark and leaves are used in the preparation of remedies; also the sign of large tall trees. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.55, fig.9A].

**Trees*



3 Sign of plants. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.57, fig.10].

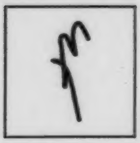
**Small leaf*



4 Sign of grain. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.57, No.11A].

**Son of the womb*

Vibration

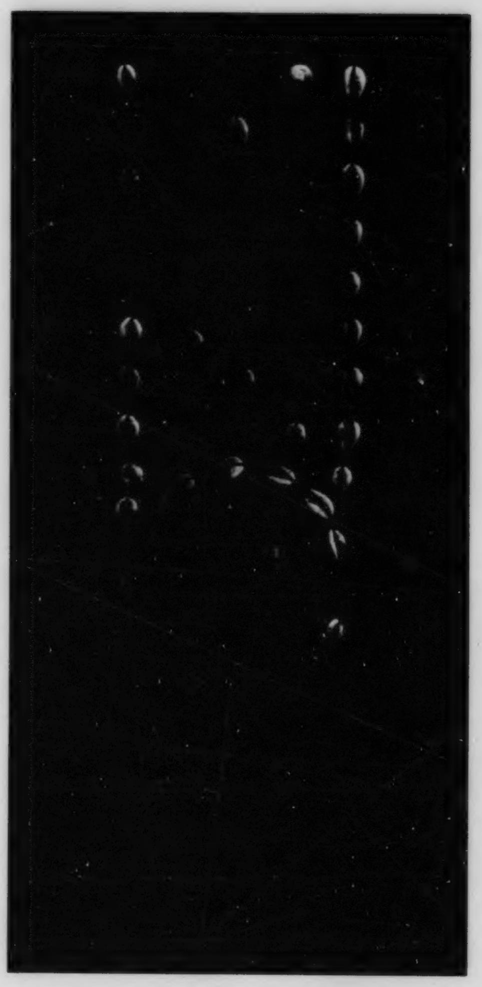


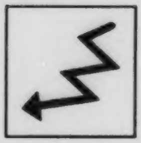
5 Initial vibration. Dogon. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.109, No.44].

**Head*

N'domo ku Mask (Bambara, Mali)

This mask is associated with *n'domo*, the first stage of the initiation process among the Bambara. The *n'domo* welcomes young male children prior to their circumcision. The symbolism of *n'domo* masks varies according to the number of horns they possess: three and six horns signify a male mask; four and eight, a female mask; two, five and seven, an androgynous mask (as indicated here). The number five evokes the five fingers of the hand, symbol of the work done by man. The mask is ornamented with cowry shells and wild berries. (Bastin, 1984).

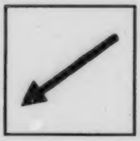




6 Vibration, air in motion, lightning. Luba of the Kasai region, Zaire.

**Lightning*

Vital Principle

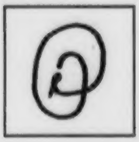


7 Vital principle, life force, life.

➤ ENERGIES ➤ GOD ➤ LIFE

W

Wandering

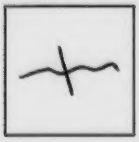


1 Wandering after death, insomnia, "state of souls that will never enjoy eternal rest". The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.129, No.89].

**Obstacle preventing sleep*

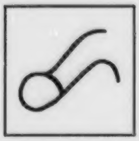
➤ SOUL ➤ DISORDER ➤ MADNESS

Water



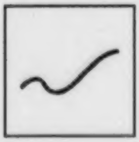
2 Sign of water, of its original flowing. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.62, fig.15].

**First rain*



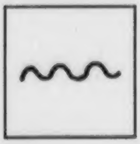
3 Sign of water, protection from death by drowning. Bozo of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.82, fig.1A].

**Water*



4 Sign representing all bodies of water. Bozo, Mali. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.85, fig.10].

**The waters*



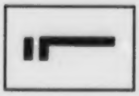
5 Sign of water. Central Africa.

**Water*

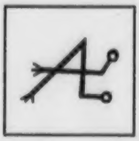
➤ FERTILITY ➤ WOMAN

Wealth

Wealth, literally and figuratively; prosperity.

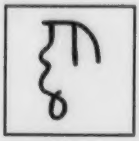


6 A rich man



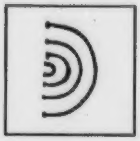
7 Wealth, literally and figuratively. Graphic system of Minianka initiation societies and divination fraternities, Mali. [JES 1979: p.97].

**Wealth*



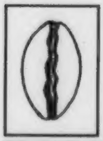
8 Wealth. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.147, No.144].

**Wealth*



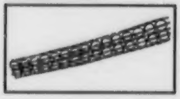
9 Wealth and material possessions. The semicircles indicate the number and diversity of possessions. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ikoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

**A lot of money*



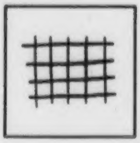
10 Wealth, literally and figuratively; prosperity, social prestige. Central Africa.

**The cowry shell*



➤ BLESSING ➤ GOOD FORTUNE ➤ DIVINE GIFTS
➤ GRACE ➤ FERTILITY ➤ HEALTH ➤ LIFE

Welcome

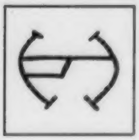


11 Welcome, conviviality, hospitality. The Ohendo and other Central African ethnic groups.

**The net*

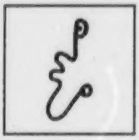
➤ LOVE ➤ GOODNESS ➤ OPENING ➤ UNION

Wickedness, Hate



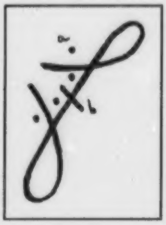
12 Heart without love.

**Evil heart*



13 Wickedness, evil intention. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.136, No.110].

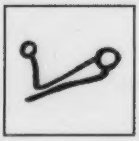
**Wickedness*



14 Wickedness defeated. This sign represents the vanquished evil serpent. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.
a) the snake's venom
b) the knife with which the snake was killed

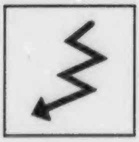
**The evil serpent killed*

➤ EVIL



15 Wickedness by thought, words or acts. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.102, No.27].

**Evil mouth*

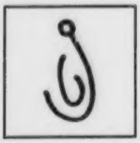


16 Vengeance, grudge.

Fire

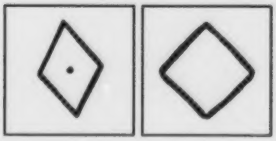
➤ ENEMY ➤ HOSTILITY ➤ EVIL ➤ WORD

Woman, Femininity



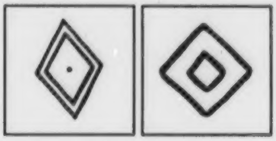
17 Woman, femininity. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.140, No.124].

**Woman*



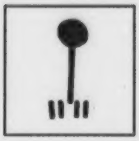
18 Depending on the region, "woman" in general or "married woman". The central point represents the navel. Central Africa.

**The support of the navel*



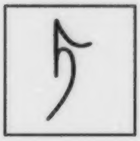
19 Woman accomplished in marriage, wife. Central Africa.

**The guardian of the navel*



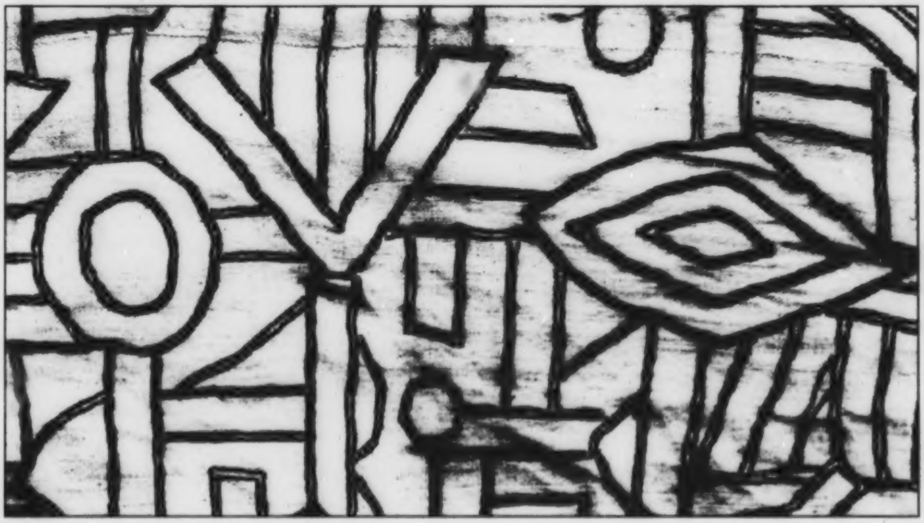
20 Woman, femininity ➤ HUMAN BEING. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.43, fig.1A].

The woman

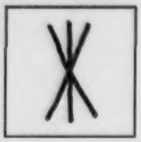


21 Woman, femininity, female sexual organs. The Komo Initiation Society; Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.121, No.72].

**Femininity*

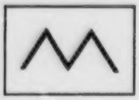


Woman (W19 A, B); Initiation (I 12 B); Man (M 9)



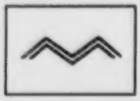
22 Woman. Malinke and Bambara of Mali. [CIS 1983: p.138, fig.5b].

**The woman*



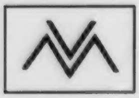
23 Woman, femininity, female principle. Central Africa. [FAÏ-NZU 1993; FAÏ-NZU & NGO].

**Like the banana tree*

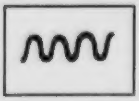


24 Woman, femininity, life force, water, source of life, married woman, wife, female principle. This sign is a variation of the preceding sign; the chevron is a representation of the diamond shape whose parts are no longer one on top of the other, but side by side. Central Africa. [FAÏ-NZU 1993].

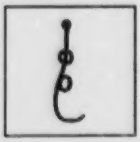
**Like the banana tree*



25 Accomplished woman, an initiated woman ➤ INITIATION. Ohendo and other populations of Central Africa.

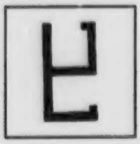


26 Woman, femininity, life force, water, source of life ➤ WATER. West Africa and populations of the Kasai region, Zaire.



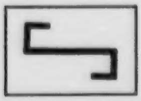
27 Femininity, the female sex, femininity inherent in the androgyny of creatures. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.138, No.116].

**Feminine*

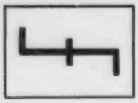


28 Feminine principle, woman, femininity ➤ MAN. West and Central Africa.

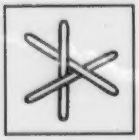
**Feminine principle*



29 Woman.

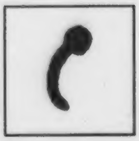


30 Girl, young girl.

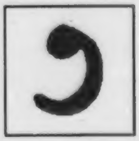


31 Biological symbol for "woman" among the Serer of Senegal and Gambia. This sign represents three crossed pestles. The pestle is a male symbol that the Serer use as an altar for ritual sacrifice, while three is the number symbolizing woman and child birth. [GRA 1990].

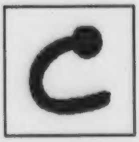
32 Representations symbolizing "woman" among the Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.46, fig.3].



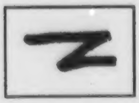
a) woman*



b) newborn female*



c) young girl*



d) woman in menopause; this sign also represents death which gradually creeps into a woman's body at this stage of her life ➤ DEATH.

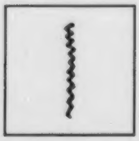
➤ COMMITMENT ➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ INITIATION ➤ FERTILITY ➤ MAN ➤ MARRIAGE

Word, Speech

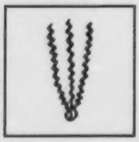
First principle of life, the word puts into action all potentials, good and evil, contained by the universe. It is creative at both the cosmic and human level as it embodies the principle of fecundity.

It can transform creatures and events towards good as towards evil. In most African societies, the word is classed in precise categories according to the intention of the speaker or the effect it produces in the listener.

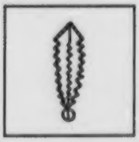
The works of Geneviève Calame-Griaule document how the Dogon of the south-eastern Niger Loop divide the varieties of speech into forty-eight categories according to the psychological motivations of the speaker and the circumstances surrounding the utterance, and furthermore, how most of these words are also represented graphically in different forms. [CAL-GRI 1965].



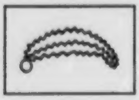
The path of the word. The Dogon consider the word to be generated from water, the movement of which gives speech the quality of vibration. Thus, word and water are represented graphically in the same manner. Normal speech moves in a regular spiral and in a straight line. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.68, fig.2C].



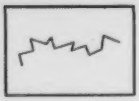
The word of truth. The Dogon symbolically ascribe the origin of the word to the millet seed. Born of this seed and moving in constant vibration from the turbulent motion of water, the word is represented by three regular spirals with equal elements. For the Dogon, these elements assimilate the symbolism of the chevron (v-shaped) pattern. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.67, fig.1B].



The right word. The three lines meet and reach the ears of the listener when there is a moment of silence. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.67, fig.1A].

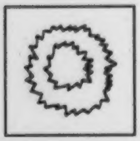


The false word. It is empty and turns in the wrong direction. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.67, fig.1C].



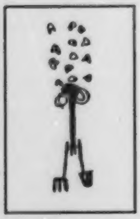
33 Speech of the dead. This sign features the chevron pattern of the word but is irregular, without beginning or end, moving haphazardly without following in any specific direction and destroying everything in its path. ➤ DEATH. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.88, fig.A].

Speech of the dead



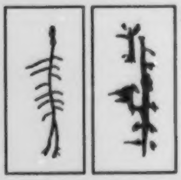
34 Words of dispute. The two lines turn into themselves without meeting each other symbolizing two speakers who remain intransigent ➤ ENEMY, HOSTILITY. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.88, fig.B].

**Dispute*



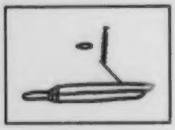
35 The revelation of the word, the manner in which a child receives the word at birth. The word is communicated to the child like rain in a shower of seeds which also represent the seeds of the collarbone, principle of man's subsistence. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.189, fig.6].

**The path of the word*



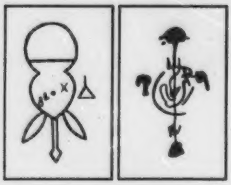
36 These signs represent a man with his words and organs likened to the stalk of millet ➤ HUMAN BEING. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.190, fig.7].

**The word which is in the liver*
**The stalk of millet*



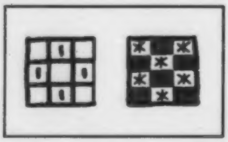
37 Speech in general, the preconception of all words given to men by the Supreme Being *Nommo*, indeterminate and lacking incarnation but containing all potentials for speech. This red, black and white sign represents the rainbow (announcing the coming of rain) and weaving which was the instrument of revelation. Only Dogon myth can fully explain the visual elements of this sign. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.191, fig.8].

**Traces of the word of Nommo*



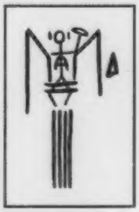
38 The word of the head of the family, which is not necessarily just, but which all respect, fear and receive without discussion. It is male and malevolent and likened to the forge, a technique of fire. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.193, fig.9].

The evil word of Amma Serou



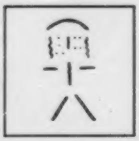
39 The word said in confidence, secret and feminine, that no one - especially men - should hear. It is generally friendly and pleasant ➤ THE UNKNOWN, SECRET. This sign represents a field of cotton and evokes the notion of spinning, a privileged moment in the conversations of women. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.198].

A confidence



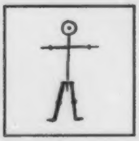
40 Enigmatic words, which beg to be explained in order to be understood by the uninitiated (riddles, enigmas, omens, certain proverbs and fables). The sign evokes the image of the weaver, the instrument used by *Nommo* to reveal the word which in the beginning was an enigma for men. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.201].

The word of weaving



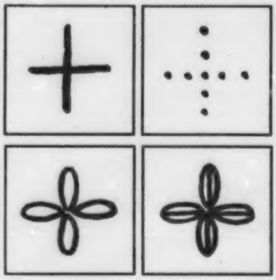
41 Words of prayer, ritual utterances spoken when naming a child. The sign represents the names and the seeds in the collarbones of the child as well as the chevron-patterned spirals of the word. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.201, fig.13].

The naming of a child



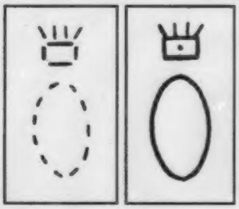
42 Words of gratitude and thanking ➤ GRATEFULNESS, expressed by the man happy with the blessing and favour bestowed upon him by the supernatural. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.219].

Words for counting the parts of the body



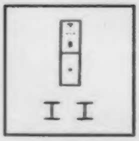
43 The last words of a dying man to his son. The sign represents the opening of the "collar-bones" of *Amma*, the Creator, and thus the end of creation. Hence, it is associated with "the end" of words. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.208, fig.18].

Amma's collarbones



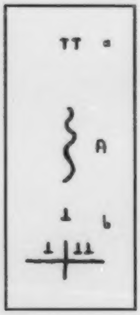
44 Creation in its completeness, abundance, perfection ➤ GOD, CREATION, PLENITUDE; the cultivated earth which ensures the life of men ➤ WORLD. This word is serious, fraught with consequence and should not be spoken lightly. The sign represents the egg, symbol of the enclosed world containing Creation in all its abundance. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: 228].

The word of Amma's placenta



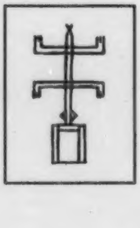
45 Accurate predictions, true words. This sign represents the divination table. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.229].

Word of the white fox



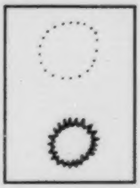
46 The sign of the dream in which one hears the words of the dead; also the sign of inner speech, of premonition and divination. Elements a) and b) represent information traced on the divination table while questioning the fox about the meaning of the dream. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.230].

Dream



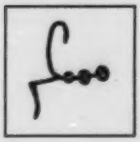
47 This sign which represents the *kànaga* mask is associated with words of quarrel and dispute, insults and mask chants ➤ ENEMY, HOSTILITY. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.232].

The biting of Nommo's ark



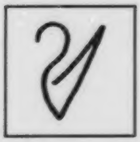
48 Fickle speech, which jumps from one subject to another, going around in circles or responding evasively without directly addressing the question. Speech which turns into itself like the earth around the sun. Dogon, Niger Loop, West Africa. [CAL-GRI 1965: p.245].

Descent of the sun's placenta



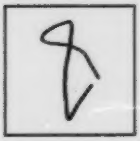
49 The secret and profound words of the elders. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951; DIE & CIS 1972: p.103, No.28].

**Stuttering*



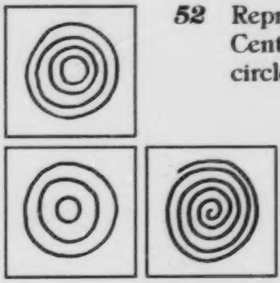
50 The spoken word, the ambivalence of the word. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.103, No.29].

**Word*



51 Public speech, words of initiation. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.134, No.103].

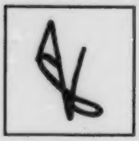
**I say*



52 Representations of the word in many cultures of Central Africa ➤ CIRCLE, SPIRAL. The number of circles may vary.

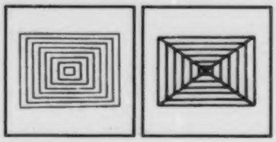
➤ SILVER ➤ BLESSING ➤ DISCERNMENT ➤ CREATION ➤ GOD ➤ HUMAN BEING ➤ HOSTILITY ➤ THE UNKNOWN ➤ DEATH ➤ PLENITUDE ➤ GRATEFULNESS ➤ SUN ➤ SPIRAL

World, earth, cosmos, universe.



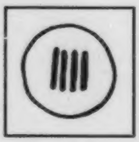
53 Sign expressing surprise and amazement in the face of the totality of the universe. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.135, No.107].

*Ah! Yes!



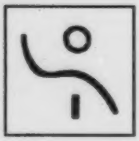
54 World, cosmos, universe ➤ CREATION. Mangbetu of Zaire, Yoruba of Nigeria and Benin.

Spider's web



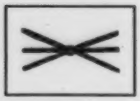
55 At the centre of the circle of the world, the earth is represented by four vertical marks signifying the fingers of the Creator. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.16, fig.16B].

*The white earth



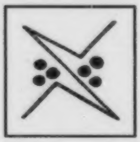
56 The earth. Minianka. [JES 1979, p.97].

*The earth



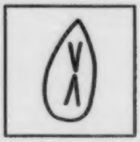
57 The earth (inhabited by man).

*A changing world



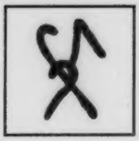
58 Cosmos, the invisible world reflected in the visible. Nsibidi pictographic and ideographic system used by the Egbo fraternity of the Efik, Ekoi, Igbo and Ibibio ethnic groups of Nigeria.

*Reversed image



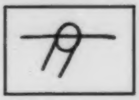
59 The two worlds, life here below and life in the future. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951; DIE & CIS 1972: p.146, No.141].

*The two worlds



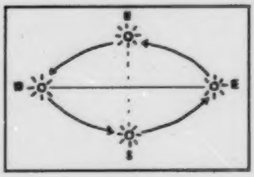
60 Correlation of the world of today and the world of the future, union. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.95, No.18].

**To go home*

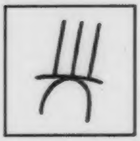


61 Sign of the earth, its depth or surface, rich and favourable to cultivation or poor and sterile. Keita of the Mande, West Africa. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.61, fig.14A].

**The earth*

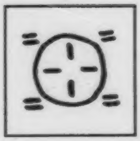


62 Symbol of the world as perceived by the Kongo of Zaire illustrating the trajectory of the sun ➤ CROSSROADS. [FU-KIA 1969].



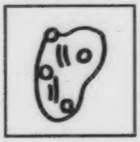
63 Sign of the world in change and the transformation of things. Bambara. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.76, fig.14].

**The world in change*



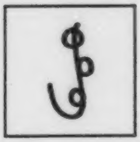
64 The system of the world and its reorganization in ancient times. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.29, fig.68].

**The chief 's goblet*



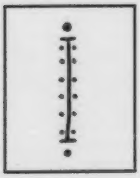
65 The totality of the universe and knowledge ➤ KNOWLEDGE. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.116, No.59].

**The world is unfinished.*



66 Land, collective property of the village, soil. The Komo Initiation Society, Mande, West Africa. [DIE & CIS 1972: p.141, No.128].

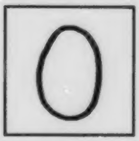
**The land*



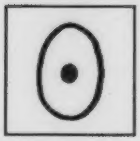
67 Sign symbolizing the system of the world and the twelve months of the year. Dogon. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.21, fig.36].

**The game of "ê"*

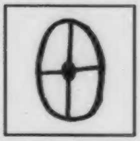
68 Among the Dogon of Mali, the universe and its different aspects are represented by a circle or an oval. [GRI & DIE 1951: p.19, fig.34].



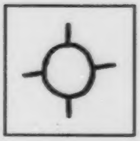
The world, Circle of God* ➤ GOD



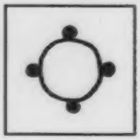
The world, Circle of God*; the central dot represents God ➤ GOD



The beginning of creation and the positioning of the four cardinal points ➤ CREATION



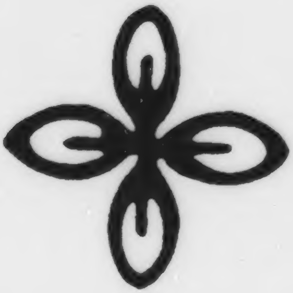
The beginning of creation, the world is encompassed by the four cardinal points ➤ CREATION



The creation of the world ➤ CREATION

➤ CROSSROADS ➤ CIRCLE ➤ CREATION ➤ GOD
➤ CARDINAL POINTS

Table of Signs
(Synoptic Chart)



"Let us live together."

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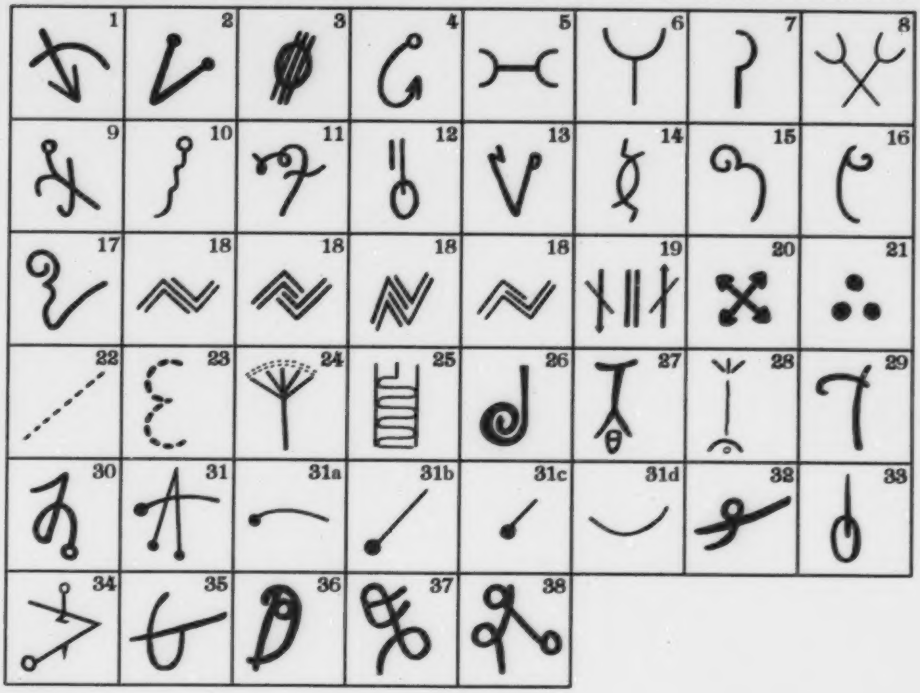

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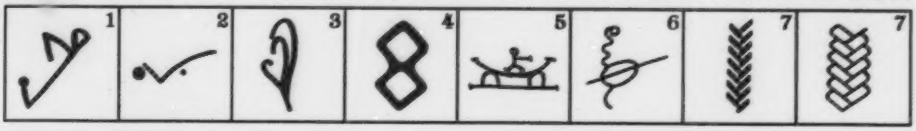

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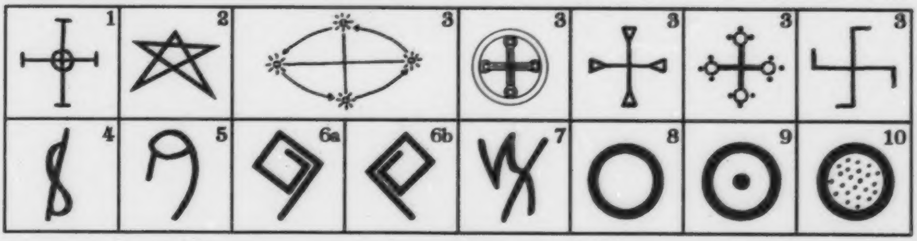
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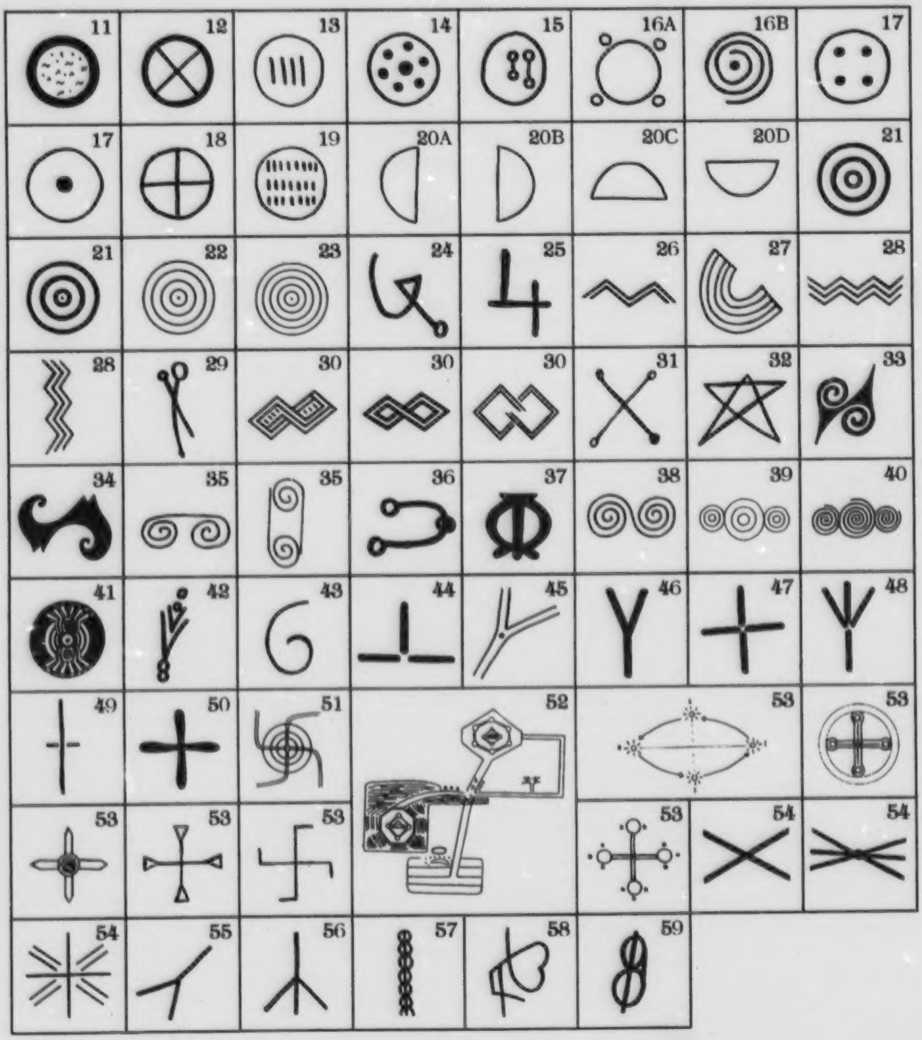

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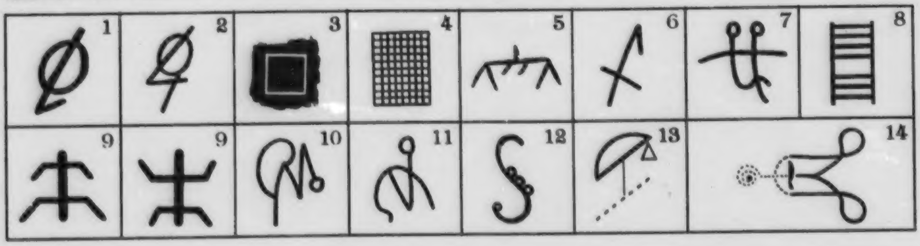

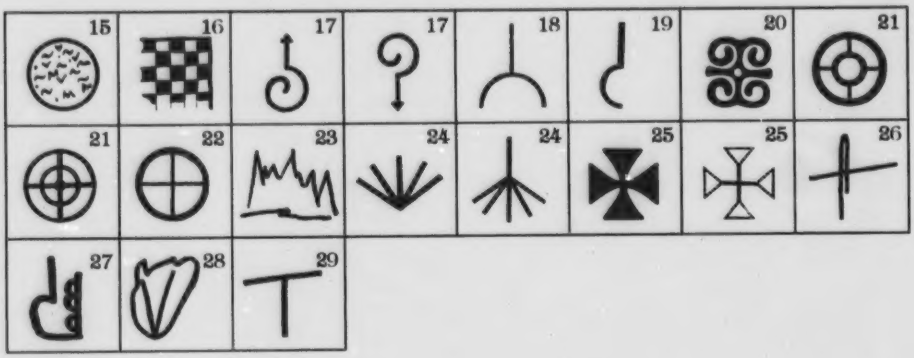

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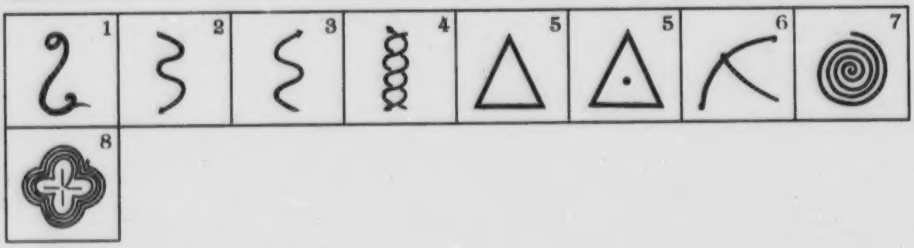

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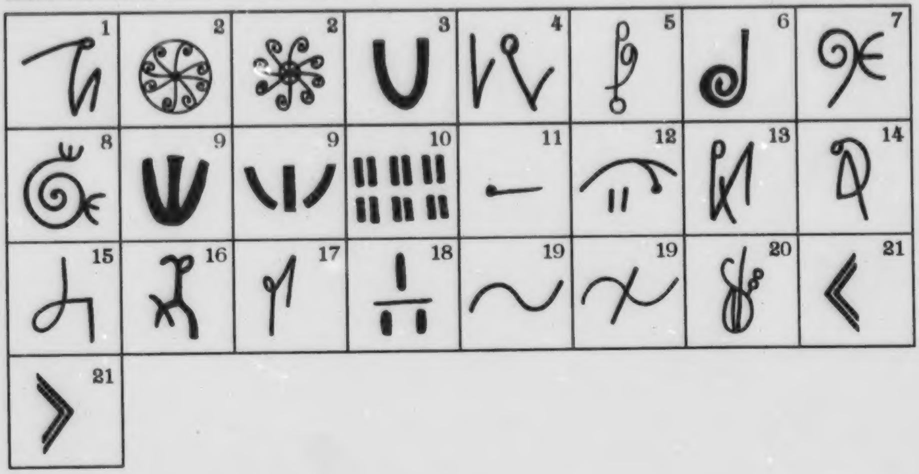

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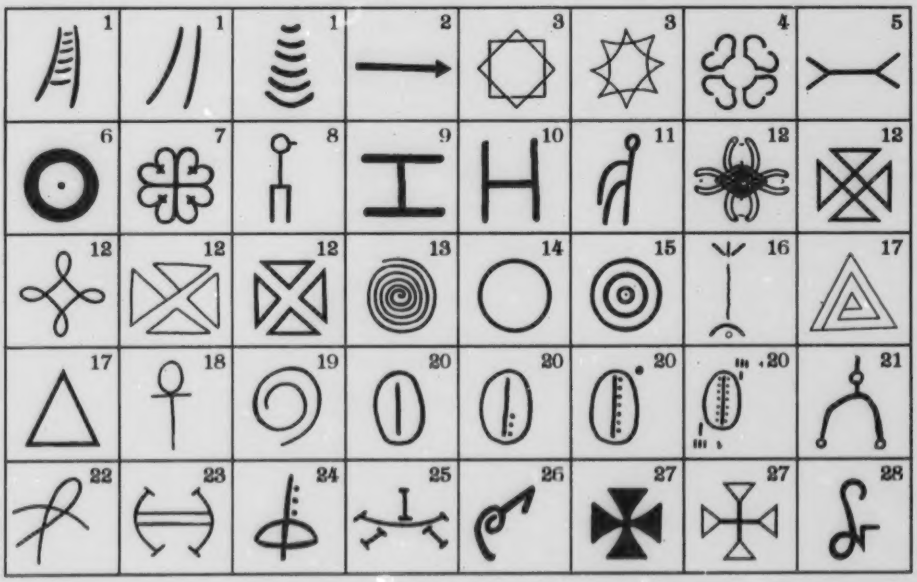

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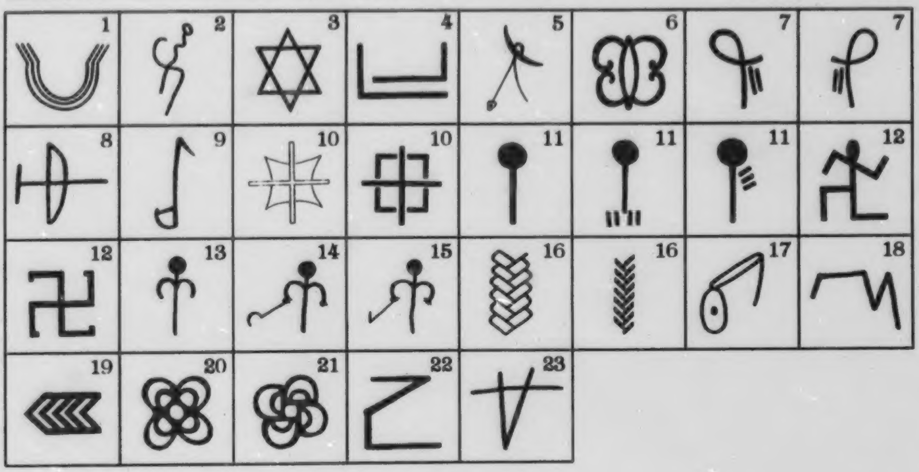

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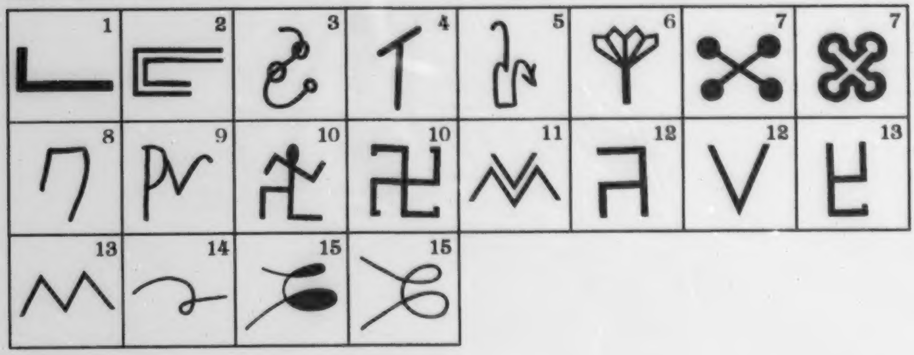

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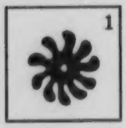
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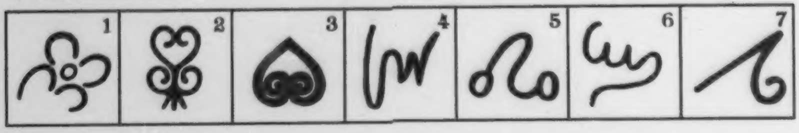

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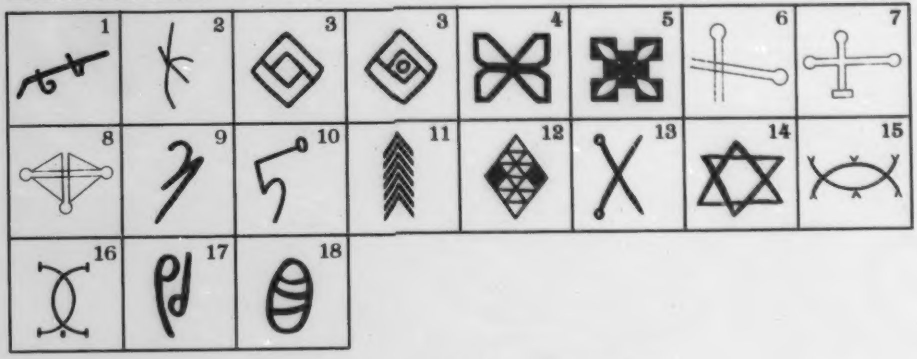

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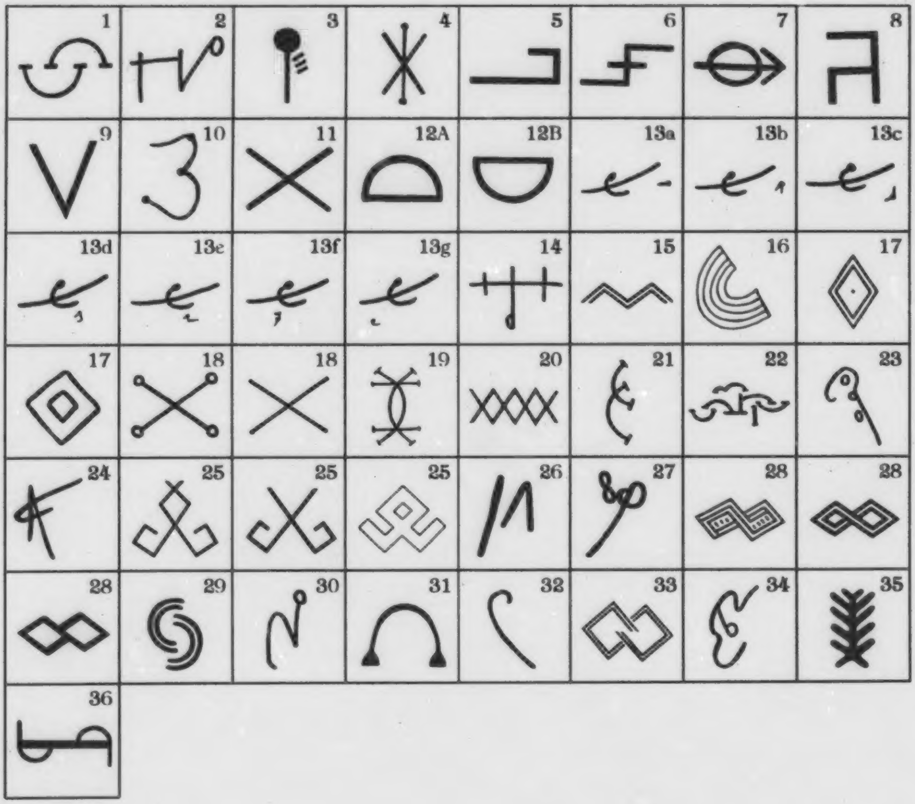

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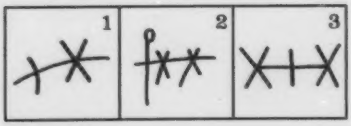

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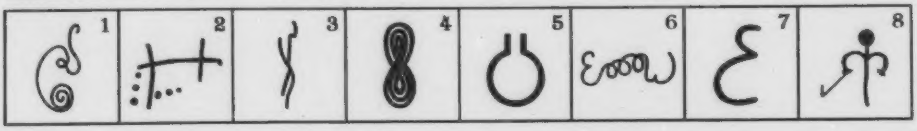

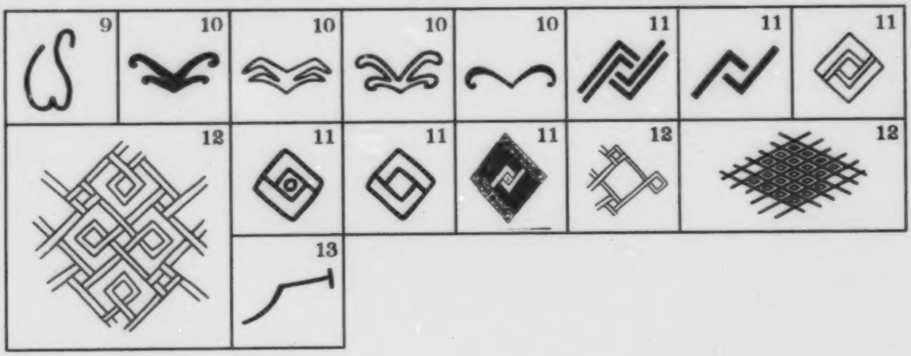
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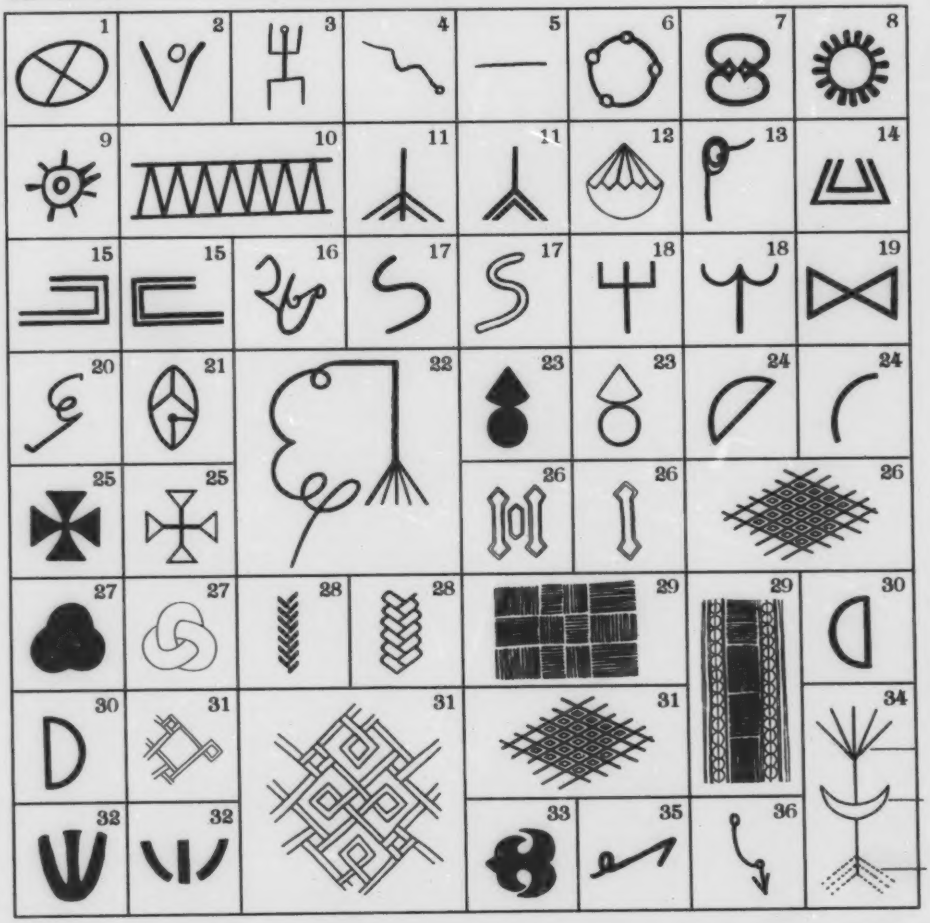
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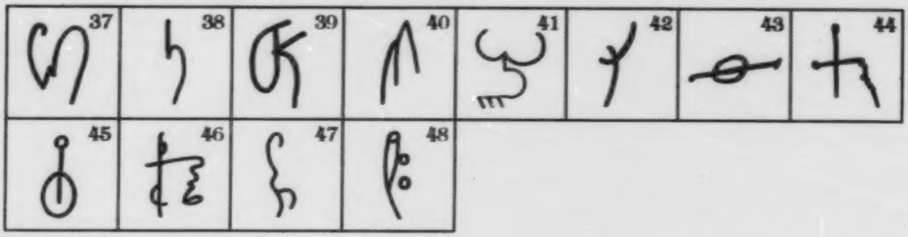
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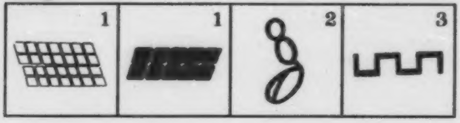
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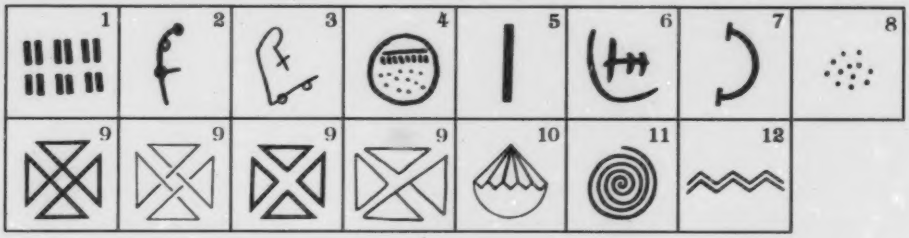
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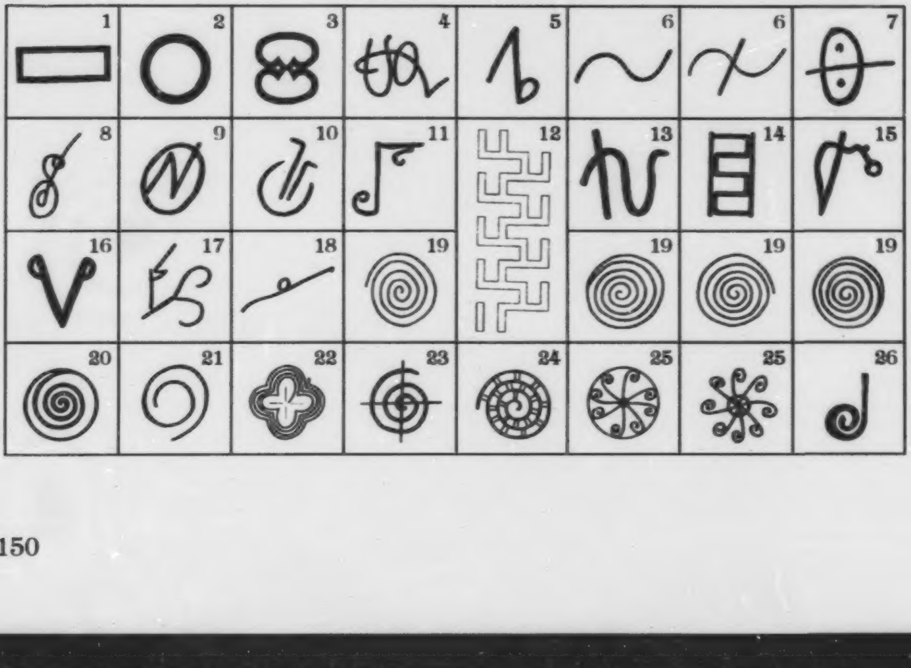
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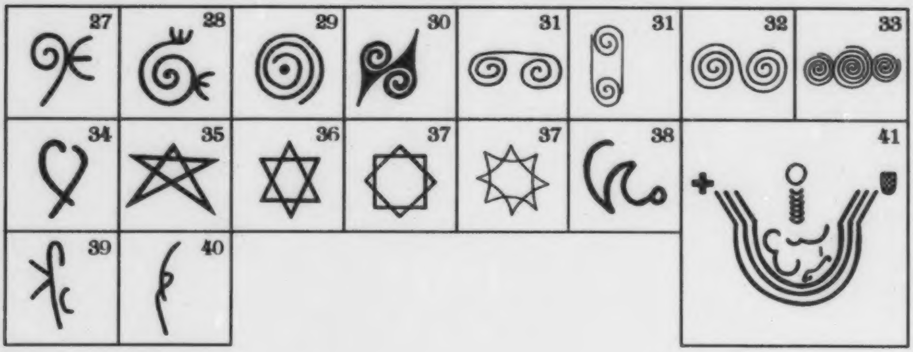
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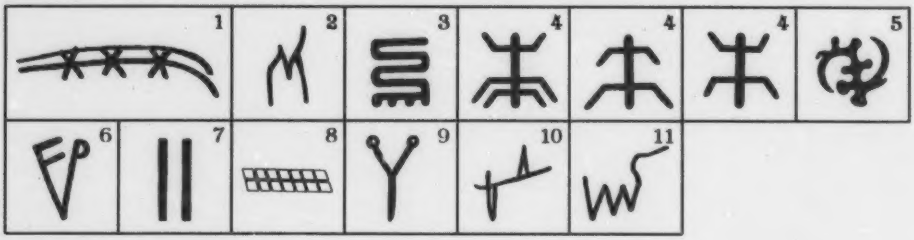
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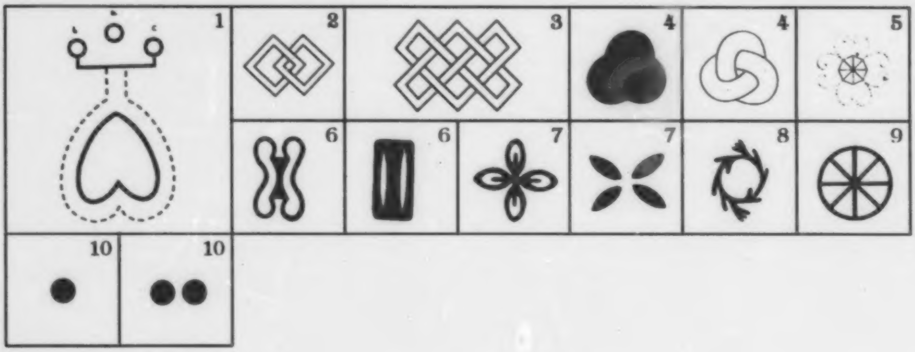
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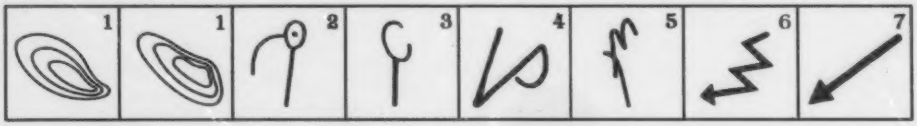
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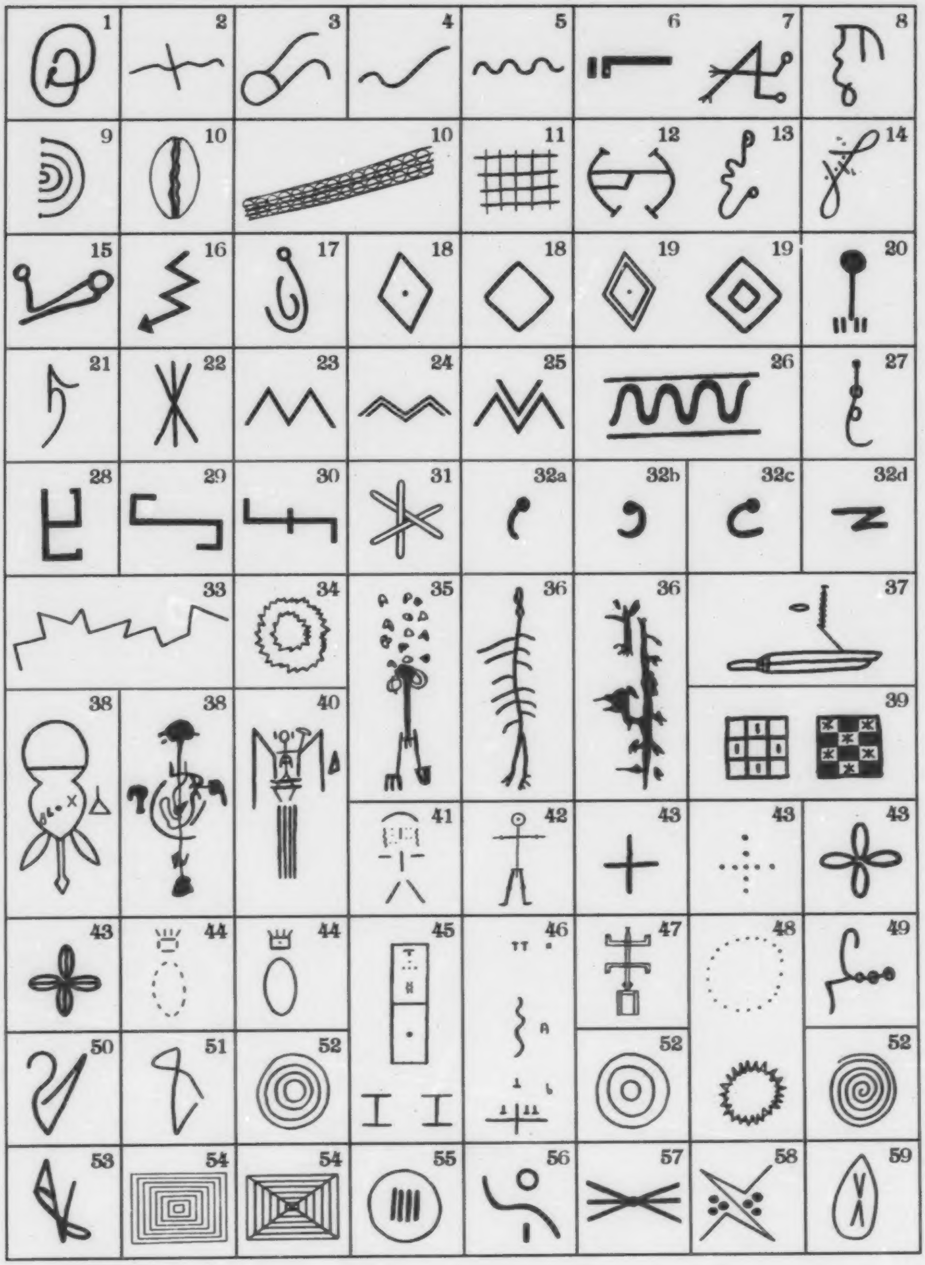

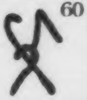
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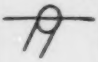
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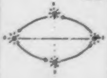
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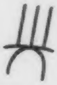
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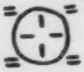
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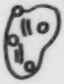
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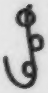
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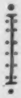
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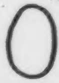
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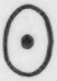
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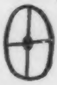
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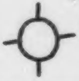
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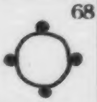
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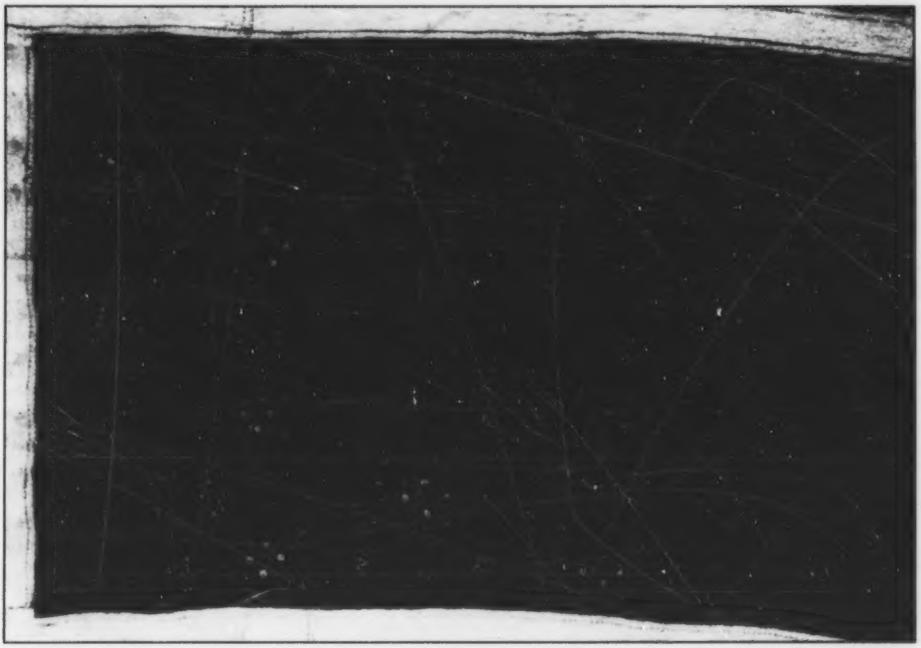
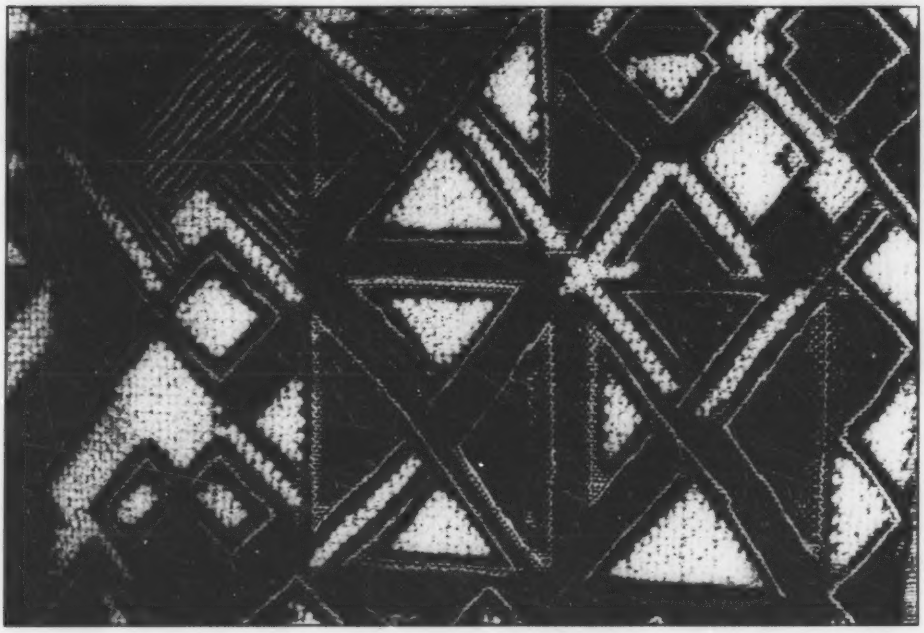


Origin (O12)



God (G12); Coordination (C30); Maturity (M25); Royalty (R9)

Table of Names (Languages of Origin)

The enigma of the word

Explanatory Notes

1. The Transcription of African Languages

a) The transcription system adopted here reflects the conventional orthography used for African languages with the incorporation of modifications specific to individual countries.

b) Where published sources have been relied upon, the orthography employed in these sources has been respected.

c) At the request of Youssouf Cissé, co-author of *Les fondements de la société d'initiation du Komo*, the names of all Komo (Bambara) signs drawn from this particular work are represented here using the writing system currently employed in Mali.

2. Sign Names in their Languages of Origin

African languages form families and constitute linguistic zones within which they maintain relationships of varying proximity. It is possible for one sign to possess the same designation in several languages belonging to the same linguistic zone. In the table which follows, the language cited in the third column is the source used here.

When a sign has the same designated meaning in two or more very closely related languages, these languages are noted e.g. Tshiluba and Lulua (Zaire); Dogon, Bambara and Malinke (Mali).

In general, the final column lists the names as they are found in the Glossary. When a sign has several designated meanings in the same language, these are given in the table.

Table of Names (Languages of Origin)

A

No.	Name	Language of Origin	Designated Meaning
1	*dyèè*	Bambara	Union
2	*í bóló fla*	Bambara	Both your hands
3	*nyama dyí*	Bambara	Water laden with vital forces
4	*sèn nò tyaámán*	Bambara	Several footprints
5	*wè*	Toma	Agreement
6/7	*njawó*	Ohendo	Fulfilment of a wish
8	*wi*	Toma	Membership
9	*bèn wáléw lá*	Bambara	Harmony of action
10	*ùhùn*	Bambara	Yes!
11	*kbíní ntaára*	Bambara	Since I left
12	*a dyiginá*	Bambara	He came down
13	*dèmènínke*	Bambara	To bring help
14	*fyèn dyu*	Bambara (Keita)	The origin of the wind
15	*fyèn sumale*	Bambara (Keita)	Cold wind
16	*fyèn goni*	Bambara (Keita)	Hot wind
17	*dakenye*	Bambara (Keita)	The spiral
18	*ndòndù*	Tshiluba	Pact
19	*'cingo*	Ohendo	Alliance
a	*nkónyi*		The sower
b	*'kákọ̱*		Release
c/d	*akonga*		Spear
20	*akoma ntaoso*	Akan	The meeting of hats
21	*duge*	Dogon	Stone of alliance
	dícyuwa	Tshiluba	The hearth
22	*onkôma*	Ohendo	The Ancestors or The Spirits
23	*litoi*	Ohendo	The ears (of the Ancestors)
24	*olungú*	Ohendo	Virtues of the Ancestors

25	*ojingo*	Ohendo	The travelling of the Ancestors
26	*afryi*	Akan	Male and Female
27	*shoohkeshooh*	Minianka	Double chain
28	*Klè*	Minianka	God
29	*waáti (tuma) kòrò*	Bambara	Ancient times
30	*gálé maáw*	Bambara	First human beings
31	*nani ba*	Bambara (Keita)	Four mothers
32	*zira*	Bambara	Copper
33	*haán*	Bambara	Yes!
34	*lasina*	Minianka	Longing
35	*mákó*	Bambara	The things of God
36	*kùntígíyá*	Bambara	The mastery that rests in authority
37	*wílí ní a yé*	Bambara	Get up!
38	*bò a lá*	Bambara	Get out of there!

B

1	*sárámán*	Bambara	Beauty
2	*pā wala*	Bambara (Keita)	Birds in flight
3	*dugaw*	Bambara	Blessings
4	*epa j*	Akan	Handcuffs
5	*uno nga*	Igbo	Prison
6	*kaso*	Bambara	Prison
7	*cípyá*	Tshiluba	Braid

C

2	*yoonir*	Serer	Provisions for a journey into the afterlife
3	*yowa*	Kikongo	The cross of the world
	mátúmbaa búlábá	Tshiluba	The far reaches of the universe
4	*munuméné*	Bambara	To caress
5	*n'kùn (né kùn)*	Bambara	My head

7	*latomolí seérá*	Bambara	Action of choosing or sorting
8	*míkónó*	Tshiluba	Generic term designating different configurations of the circle and the spiral and signifying "the mark of the beginning"
	kíshèngú kífûndá	Kisongye	Circle, coiling up
	lukôngolo	Kikongo	Circle
	koli	Bambara	Circle, ring
	dyè fa the	Bambara, Malinke	The egg of the world
	kara ba or kara blè	Bambara, Malinke	Big circle or Red circle
	pourouo	Akan	Circle
	kra	Akan	Spirit of God
9	*minne pilu*	Dogon	White earth
	Centre and Circumference of the Circle		
	ko bè dyu ni ko bè kùn	The basis and the reason for all things	
	ko bè ba ni ko bè fa	The substratum and the plenitude of all things	
	dali kòrò ba ni a dali kara ba	The great foundation and the great circle of creation	
	nali kòrò ba ni nali kara ba	The great foundation and the great circle of the approaching birth	
	nìn ni dya	The soul and its twin	
	dakàn ni nakàn	The voice of creation and the voice of the approaching birth (also: destiny and the future)	
	taashi ni miiri or taashi maashi	Reflection and thought	
	dùn ko ni sànko dùnko ni sako	Things of the depths below and things of the world above (also: by analogy, desire and will)	
	dun ba koro bo bali ni dàn ba kara ba bali	The great unknowable depth below and the great irreducible limit in all its dimensions)	
	ma miiri ni ma taashi	Thought and reflection (divine and human)	
10/11	*málóndá*	Tshiluba	The trail or Dispersion
14	*tolo dyuno*	Dogon	The Pleiades
15	*tolo dyuno*	Dogon	The Pleiades
16 A	*tolo yazu*	Dogon	Venus in the East
B	*enegirin tolo*	Dogon	Venus at its Zenith (The Shepherd's Star)

17	*nomo kurundo sugundu*	Dogon	The ark of Nommo the Instructor which descended (to earth)
18	*bara*	Dogon	The world
20 A	*mbomba*	Ohendo	The hiding place (where harmful fetishes are hidden)
B	*mbéki*	Ohendo	The valley, point of turbulence in a current of water
C	*ngando*	Ohendo	Crocodile
D	*wèéci*	Ohendo	Spirits
21	*míkónó isatu*	Tshiluba	Three concentric circles
	mányíngu	Tshiluba	Coils, name specific to concentric circles
	insésé	Ohendo	Light, he who possesses "the light"
	Adingra ôhêné	Akan	King Adingra
	ilweeng álweeng	Bushong	The plug securely fastened
22	*ndondu or míkónó inayi*	Tshiluba	The pact
24	*bólókólí*	Bambara	Washing of the hand
25	*sigi dolo*	Bambara	The star of circumcision
26	*lonkonkondo*	Ohendo	Like the banana tree
27	*nkombe or ongonji*	Ohendo	The guarantee or The ladder of generations (that which fills a void)
	ndelanganyi	Tshiluba	Generations
28	*bishaang'l*	Bushong	That which unifies
	mánúngú	Tshiluba	That which links
29	*pán fén*	Bambara	Thing that flies
31	*bayoro*	Minianka	Country
32	*masa soloman*	Minianka	The chief's domain
33/34 35	*nsa!*	Akan	Stand firm! Take heart!
36	*blènmán*	Bambara	Red
37	*oye den se wawa aba*	Ashanti	He is as tough as the seed of the wawa tree (Perseverance)
38	*Nyamé-Nyankonpon*	Akan	God of the heavens - Goddess of the earth

41	*akalu ududo*	Igbo	Traces of the spider
	bééyá	Kisongye	The Perfect One
42	*sa ní dugu tá do*	Bambara	This is for the sky and the earth.
43	*men banu*	Bambara	Red copper
44	*mavambua matatu nzila*	Woyo	Crossroads of three paths
45	*mpâmbu a mbièkolo*	Kikongo	Crossroads of purification
47	*liyowa*	Woyo	Crossing
48	*mpaambu nzila*	Woyo	The parting of ways
50	*másángú mansánga*	Tshiluba	Crossroads of good fortune
51	*njílá wá majimbu*	Tshiluba	Magic crossroads
52	*njílá wá mílánjílánjí or cídímíná nzájí*	Tshiluba	Crossroads of the Milky Way or The Last Judgement
55/56	*ocíndo*	Ohendo	Roots, power
57	*atem*	Dogon	Custom
58	*tómó*	Bambara	Ruins
59	*dángá*	Bambara	Curse

D

1	*kulu tye dyi*	Bambara	The male mountain's water, torrent
2	*kulu músó dyí*	Bambara	The female mountain's water
4	*cyâtá cya lúfu*	Tshiluba	The mat of death
5	*wolotipya*	Minianka	Man-star
6	*saya*	Bambara	Death
7	*bàn*	Bambara	Death
12	*dákā*	Bambara	The voice of creation
13	*yapola*	Ohendo	Dexterity, skill
14	*mpelo*	Ohendo	Difference, inequality
15	*málóndá*	Tshiluba	The trail or Dispersal
16	*kaba*	Dogon	Classified, distinguished, separated
18	*ale̱no̱*	Ohendo	Total disagreement
19	*ishíngola*	Ohendo	Partial disagreement

20	*duamen*	Akan	The ram's horns
23	*loyenge*	Ohendo	Disorder, confusion
24	*ekata*	Ohendo	The Hand of the Invisible
25	*musuyidiè*	Akan	To ward off misfortune
26	*son masa*	Bambara	My generous master of the heavens, Gift from the master of heaven
27	*flã flã*	Bambara	From both sides; hesitation
28	*kòli*	Bambara	To not succeed, to fail
29	*ana ma tō*	Dogon	The pattern of dry rain

E

1	*nuhum koro*	Minianka	Enemy
2/3/4	*búkóla*	Tshiluba	Energies
5	*ekoka* *lúkasu lwa bángábángá*	Ohendo Tshiluba	Equilibrium Hoe of the Beginning (of time)
6	*uta edide*	Igbo	Poisoned arrow
7	*mányíngu* *or mikono*	Tshiluba	The coil Circles
8	*nzoolú wá ntándá*	Tshiluba	The village hen

F

1	*nòkòyá*	Bambara	Facility
3	*osranfa* *ngondo*	Akan	The crescent moon Bantu moon
4	*dyírí dén*	Bambara	Child of the tree
5	*dén kenrá sabané yé*	Bambara	The child has become three children (the triplets).
9	*kakasa ka nzoolú*	Tshiluba	Hen's foot
10	*mvuláá mbédí*	Tshiluba	First rain, Primordial rain
12	*ta*	Bambara (Keita)	Fire
13	*a yé! maaw*	Bambara	Here it is, people!

14	*dyenilíke*	Bambara	A burn
16	*goniyá*	Bambara	Heating up
17	*wárá dén*	Bambara	Child of the wildcat
19	*imbéngú*	Ohendo	Fragility
20	*dyònmá*	Bambara	To diminish

G

1	*nkombe*	Ohendo	Ladder of generations
4	*Umumûmu*	Ohendo	He whose name must not be uttered (the Ineffable)
5	*Londéko*	Ohendo	The Incomparable
6	*Kra*	Akan	Spirit of God
7	*nyamedua*	Akan	Altar for the God of the heavens, The presence of God
8	*men*	Dogon	Copper or God's messenger
9/10	*nommo dyèn*	Dogon	The pillar of Nommo
11	*n'tigi bá*	Bambara	My great owner
12	*Kalunga*	Bantu	The Sacred, The Infinite
18	*amma gunnono*	Dogon	God's captive or God held captive
19	*ammanam bele*	Dogon	God's fan
21	*adaman*	Minianka	Good fortune
22	*yelèn*	Bambara	Light
23	*akoko nan*	Nsibidi	Heart filled with genuine love
24	*maa karún*	Bambara	Virtuous person or pity
25	*igba nneta*	Nsibidi	Visiting the sick
26	*makari*	Bambara	Pity
27	*musuyidiè*	Akan	To ward off misfortune
28	*nkaoji*	Ohendo	Gratitude, thankfulness ("The gesture that must be made")

H

1	*lokásó*	Ohendo	Harmony
2	*fúrákebaá*	Bambara	Healer
3	*monsumana*	Minianka	Health
5	*batra alo*	Minianka	Hope
6	*biribi wo Soro*	Akan	"There is something in paradise."
7	*ntépo*	Ohendo	Hostility
8	*kele*	Bambara	Quarrel
9	*breima*	Minianka	Enmity (of children)
10	*mutôtú*	Tshiluba	Star
11	*ma*	Dogon, Bambara	The person
12	*dindjé blafou*	Akan	Crossed crocodiles (male and female)
16	*cípyá*	Tshiluba	The braid
17	*maa té ke ngálá yé*	Bambara	No one becomes God
18	*kofe moko*	Bambara	People from behind
19	*akplua-ngohué*	Akan	Discussion without end
20	*kuntinkantan*	Akan	"Do not boast, do not be arrogant."
21	*papani amma yenju Kramo*	Akan	"One cannot distinguish a good Muslim from a bad one" (Truth and deceit look alike)
22	*nozí*	Bambara	Chameleon; hypocrisy
23	*ngalo*	Bambara	Lies

I

2	*disááma*	Tshiluba	Illness
3	*bana*	Bambara	Illness
4	*nyasan*	Minianka	Illness
5	*bana*	Bambara	Illness
6	*otáyokalo*	Ohendo	"We await your return."
7	*Nyame wu a na mwau*	Ashanti	"I will only die when God dies"

8	*shi-kolomán*	Bambara	Colour of the karité nut
9	*kutye ba*	Bambara	Top of the big head
10	*djindé blafou*	Akan	Crossed crocodiles (male and female)
	assosa	Akan	Hand of the monkey
	dijimbu	Tshiluba	Mystery
	kanyona	Kisongye	A meditative person
11	*nkámo*	Ohendo	Initiation
14	*kama dèn*	Bambara (Keita)	Son of the wing
15	*ahéngányé*	Ohendo	The invincible (invincibility, invisibility)

K

1	*ntésié or maté-masié*	Akan	"I heard, I'm keeping it."
2/3	*sankofa*	Akan	Name of a bird that evokes the maxim: "Go back, look everywhere and take"
4	*fán*	Bambara	Knowledge
5	*sebè or sebení*	Bambara	To write or Writing
6	*faálí*	Bambara	To fill, to satiate
7	*doón*	Bambara	To enter

L

1	*aá yaá bla*	Bambara	Leave it
2	*faàntànyá*	Bambara	Poverty
3	*woot*	Bushong	Safety
4	*fawoho*	Akan	To be free
5	*sere mayentena*	Akan	Smile and let them live
9	*wúli*	Bambara	Get up!
10	*shii bè kaba lá*	Bambara	The length of life is in the heavens
11	*elingué-dua*	Akan	The tail of the crocodile

12	*ife nwoke na nwanyi*	Igbo	Union of the numbers three and four
13	*sefèlè*	Manyinka	First Ancestors
17	*kanu*	Bambara	Love
18	*má-núnè*	Bambara	To put aside for later

M

2	*gúnnné*	Bambara	Hurried
3	*ma*	Bambara	The person
4	*mòkò*	Bambara	Man
7	*aduno keòn ana*	Dogon	Male arrow of the world
8	*yaswa*	Akan	Masculine principle
9	*joci*	Ohendo	Masculine principle
10	*tyèmán*	Bambara	Masculine
12 A	*ngando*	Ohendo	The crocodile
B	*wèéci*	Ohendo	The Spirits
13 a	*demisèn*	Bambara (Keita)	Infant
b	*bilakoro*	Bambara (Keita)	Uncircumcised
	kamalèn		Child
c	*se dèn* or *solimadèn*	Bambara (Keita)	Circumcised
	kemini		Very young man
d	*kemèn*	Bambara (Keita)	Young man
	keme gri		Mature young man
e	*tye*	Bambara (Keita)	Man
	tyebalemba		Mature man
f	*ma koro*	Bambara (Keita)	Elderly man
	tyekoroba		Old man
g	*ma duga*	Bambara (Keita)	Impotent old man
14	*fúrú*	Bambara	Marriage
15	*lonkonkondo*	Ohendo	Like the banana tree (feminine principle)
16	*nkombe ou ongonji*		The guarantee or Ladder of generations

17	*isuka-ntongu*	Ohendo	The support of the navel
	ácúnga músú	Kihemba	The guardian of the navel
18	*lomara*	Minianka	Marriage
19	*ichiba ukwu n'uno*	Igbo	"Step into the house."
20	*adja ni ya*	Akan	Marriage and its difficulties
21	*onye na nkie*	Nsibidi	Each opposing the other
22	*ise okwu*	Nsibidi	Marital dispute ("to trace the words")
23	*kóní*	Bambara	Surprise
25	*ikweek í n'nweeng*	Bushong	Squatting posture of the frog
26	*bukòli*	Bambara	The action of striking
27	*maa bá*	Bambara	Great person, elderly person
28	*imbol*	Bushong	The mediator, messenger (the relayer of information)
29	*kanyona*	Kisongye	A contemplative person
30	*kono*	Bambara	Stomach, interior
32	*taáshilí ká nyi*	Bambara	"Reflection is good."
33	*imbol*	Bushong	The mediator, messenger (the relayer of information)
34	*nkóbōw*	Bambara	Beetles
35	*aya*	Akan	The fern (of distrust)
36	*lokele*	Ohendo	Salt (Moderation)

N

1	*fú*	Bambara (Keita)	Nothing or Zero
2	*sáráká or so*	Bambara	Offering or Sacrifice
3	*fú*	Keita, Bambara	Nothingness

O

1	*ntenó*	Ohendo	Obedience
2	*waáti be or tuma be*	Bambara	At all times or From time immemorial

3	*soní yé bi yé*	Bambara	The sacrifice is today
4	*mányíngu*	Tshiluba	Coiling, intertwining. "The path by which we arrive cuts across the path by which we shall leave." (Navel)
5	*mûfu*	Ohendo	The navel, the key
6	*okolo*	Ohendo	Pillow, headrest
7	*lotói*	Ohendo	The trained ear
9	*dá*	Bambara	Mouth, doorway
10	*ikun i Wóót*	Bushong	Woot's belly (the source)
	kándálá	Tshiluba	Origin (The point of gushing forth)
11	*Woot*	Bushong	Woot
12	*ncúúm á nyim*	Bushong	The king's house
13	*wòlòso tyèmàn*	Bambara	The male sickle

P

1	*opfundamo*	Ohendo	The well of oblivion
2	*alafutana*	Manyinka	Path
3	*koro*	Manyinka	Path
6	*nyini or yèngè nyèko*	Minianka	Calm earth or The spouse of the rain
7	*adwoe*	Akan	Place of peace
8	*ékoto*	Ohendo	Horizon, infinity (the radiant sun)
9	*musa*	Minianka	Plenitude
10	*owanja*	Ohendo	Nature remodelled
11	*ocíndo*	Ohendo	Strength, potency
12	*jaso*	Ohendo	The leopard's mouth
13	*sébaáyá*	Bambara	Power, potency
14	*nkoto*	Ohendo	Powerless (The poisoned foreskin)
15	*bekeéte*	Ohendo	Weakness, feebleness
16	*dese*	Bambara	Disability
17	*okombombo*	Ohendo	Uninitiated woman

18	*njawó*	Ohendo	Fulfilment of a wish, positive response
19	*iposo*	Ohendo	Precariousness, renewal
20	*gálé*	Bambara	First
21	*nkem bu nkem*	Igbo	"What is mine is mine" (Property)
22	*n'támbo*	Ohendo	Promotion, progression
23	*seprow*	Akan	Ritual knife (Defence)
24	*búta*	Tshiluba	Arc
	otá	Ohendo	Arc
25	*fibankra*	Akan	Security
26	*iyu*	Bushong	The turtle
	nyímaa nkuvú	Tshiluba	The turtle's back
27	*díjítá*	Tshiluba	The knot
28	*myeeng*	Bushong	Disdain or Indifference
29	*ikwoong'l itéy*	Bushong	The hearth
30	*mbomba*	Ohendo	Secret place
31	*ncuum a nyim*	Bushong	The king's house
32	*kákasa kaa cyulá*	Tshiluba	Hen's foot
33	*akoko nan*	Nsibidi	Hen's foot
34	*olémbémbé*	Ohendo	Forbidden
35	*boli*	Bambara	To run
36	*dyakúmá-yé-káló-minè*	Bambara	The cat caught the moon
37	*tló*	Bambara	Ear
38	*kaba peren ká bòn*	Bambara	The explosion of the heavens is great
39	*a tó yèn*	Bambara	Leave it there.
40	*nyekene*	Bambara	Urine
41	*ncanga*	Ohendo	The nest of the sparrowhawk
42	*kasilí*	Bambara	To cry
43	*sánú*	Bambara	Gold
44	*suruman*	Bambara	That which is short
45	*bóliw nana*	Bambara	The altars have arrived.
46	*tá*	Bambara	Fire
47	*maa fáríman*	Bambara	Ardent and hearty person
48	*tá bélé-bélé*	Bambara	"Great fire, great."

Q

1	*mabush*	Bushong	Multitude
	matumu	Tshiluba, Lulua	Messengers
2	*tyaámá*	Bambara	Several, many, a lot of, in great number
3	*atim-bli*	Akan	Tortuous path

R

1	*mvulaa mbédí*	Tshiluba	Primordial rain
2	*sandyí*	Bambara	Water from the sky
3	*dyí*	Bambara	Water
4	*anadi tòn*	Dogon	The pattern of the rain
6	*klètonyungo*	Minianka	Head of the calao
7	*idiok*	Igbo	Name designating a species of baboon
9	*ikash i tam*	Bushong	Paw or paw print of a lion
10	*jaso*	Ohendo	The leopard's mouth
11	*mambo*	Kalanga	Royalty, king
12	*mambo/Wa-tete*	Kalanga	King/Royal sister

S

1	*ojiko*	Ohendo	Celestial place, sacred place
2	*alagala*	Dogon	Heaven
3	*adwoe*	Akan	Place of peace
4	*gùndó*	Bambara	Secret
5	*fiman*	Bambara	Black
6	*imbéngú*	Ohendo	Fragility
7	*fáráli*	Bambara	Separation
8	*kélén-kélén*	Bambara	One, one (distributive counting)

9	*wárí*	Bambara	Silver
10	*duaya*	Bambara	Smallness
11	*dyafan almani*	Minianka	The soul
12	*banya ngolo*	Bambara	The genealogy of the universe
13	*yèlènní*	Bambara	Ascent
14	*kasó*	Ohendo	Journey of the soul
15	*kaba nòóro*	Bambara	The charm of heaven
16	*fyè*	Bambara	Wind
17	*gundo kono*	Bambara (Keita)	Belly of the secret
18	*télíyá*	Bambara	Speed
22	*nzoolu wá ntándá*	Tshiluba	The village hen
23	*kodya*	Kikongo	Shell (migration)
24	*nkaanyi*	Tshiluba	The water snake
30	*nsa!*	Akan	Stand firm! Take heart!
31	*nsa!*	Akan	Stand firm! Take heart!
32	*Nyamé-Nyankonpon*	Akan	God of the heavens-Goddess of the earth
34	*ntí taá sísàn*	Bambara	I am not leaving now
35	*yoonir*	Serer	Provisions for a journey (into the afterlife)
38	*sèn*	Bambara	To reach, foot
39	*klebí*	Bambara	Sunset
40	*kle wúlí*	Bambara	Sunrise
41	*elémbétélo*	Ohendo	The great symbol

T

1	*fènw*	Bambara (Keita)	The triple zero
2	*miírí*	Bambara	Thought
3	*nkyimkyim*	Akan	The transformation of being
5	*Gye Nyame*	Akan	"I fear no one."
6	*tinyè tígí*	Bambara	Keeper of the truth
7	*nkonji*	Ohendo	The sower
8	*mayesh*	Bushong	Twins, misfortune

9	*Soro & Finè*	Bambara	Names of the first twins to inhabit the earth (two bodies merged into one)
	sefè	Minianka	Ancestors
10	*flaní*	Bambara	Twins
11	*tén*	Bambara	Forehead

U

1	*mbóké*	Ohendo	Solidarity (the bag)
4	*dijita*	Tshiluba	The knot
5	*imbembi*	Ohendo	Helping one another
6	*nkonsonkonson*	Akan	"We are linked in life as in death."
7	*nsirewa*	Akan	Cowry signifying: "Let us live together."
8	*elinggué-dua*	Akan	Crocodile's tail
	obi nka obie	Akan	"Bite not one another."
10	*ipfunje*	Ohendo	The Unknown, that which remains forever hidden

V

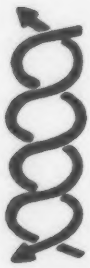
2	*sama se*	Bambara (Keita)	Trees, elephant foot
3	*foma ni*	Bambara (Keita)	Small leaf
4	*kono de*	Bambara (Keita)	Son of the womb
5	*kùn*	Bambara	Head
6	*nkuba*	Tshiluba	Lightning

W

1	*shunaabálíyá*	Bambara	Obstacle preventing sleep
2	*dyi gale*	Bambara (Keita)	Original Rain, First rainfall
3	*dyi ti*	Bozo	Water
4	*dyi shyaw ti*	Bozo	The waters
5	*mâyi*	Tshiluba	Water
7	*tontigi*	Minianka	Wealth
8	*nafolo*	Bambara	Wealth
9	*ijaa*	Igbo	A lot of money
10	*pash*	Bushong	The cowry shell
11	*otái*	Ohendo	The net
12	*ajo*	Igbo	Evil heart
13	*dyúgúyá*	Bambara	Wickedness
14	*ajo ag*	Igbo	The evil serpent killed
15	*dá dyúgú*	Bambara	Evil mouth
17	*muso*	Bambara	Woman
18	*isuka-ntongu*	Ohendo	The support of the navel
19	*ácúnga músú*	Kihemba	The guardian of the navel
21	*mysoyá*	Bambara	Femininity
22	*kòmò*	Malinke, Bambara	The woman
23/24	*lonkonkondo*	Ohendo	Like the banana tree (feminine principle)
27	*musomán*	Bambara	Feminine
28	*bla*	Akan	Feminine principle
32 a	*muso*	Bambara (Keita)	Woman
b	*muso*		Female newborn
c	*muso ni*		Young girl
d	*muso selèn*		Old woman (woman in menopause)
34	*jày so:*	Dogon	Words of dispute or the forked word
35	*sô: ódu t'õy*	Dogon	The path of the word
36	*sò: kínde-ne*	Dogon	The word which is in the liver
	tógo t'õy	Dogon	The stalk of millet

37	*nómo s ó búmu t'oy*	Dogon	Traces of the word of Nommo
49	*súsúlí*	Bambara	Stuttering
50	*kúmá*	Bambara	Word
51	*n'goó*	Bambara	I say
53	*áhán*	Bambara	"Ah! Yes!
55	*minne pilu*	Dogon	The white earth
56	*mankosi*	Minianka	The earth
57	*búlábá císángá*	Tshiluba	A changing world
58	*mmaji*	Igbo	Reversed image
59	*dyen fla*	Bambara	The two worlds
60	*só taá*	Bambara	To go home
61	*dugukolo*	Bambara (Keita)	The earth
63	*dye yelema*	Bambara	The world in change
64	*oga baña tõy*	Dogon	The chief 's goblet
65	*dyen má bán*	Bambara	The world is unfinished
66	*dugu*	Bambara	The land
67	*ē*	Bambara	The game of "ê"
68	*adinya*	Dogon	Circle of God
	ammanam dennelem	Dogon	Circle of God

Index of Symbolic Fields



Circulation of energies

A

Absurdity ➤ Disorder, Madness
ABUNDANCE
Accomplished woman ➤ Initiation
Accomplishment ➤ Initiation
Accord ➤ Agreement, Alliance, Commitment
Active force (masculine) ➤ Energies
ACTIVITY
Adultery ➤ Love
Adversary ➤ Enemy
Affection ➤ Love, Goodness
Affinity ➤ Agreement
Affluence ➤ Abundance, Alliance
Afterlife ➤ Circle, Ancestors
AGREEMENT
AID
AIR
ALLIANCE
Alternation between life and death ➤ Energies, Generations, Death
Amorous contact ➤ Love
ANCESTORS
Ancestral world ➤ Ancestors
Ancestry ➤ Origin
Androgyny ➤ Woman, Man
ANIMALS
Annihilation ➤ Death
Announcement ➤ Message
Annulment ➤ Fragility
APPEAL
Approbation ➤ Agreement
Ascent (of souls) ➤ Soul
ASPIRATION
Assistance ➤ Aid
Attack (unforeseeable) ➤ Alliance
Attainment ➤ Success

Authority (divine, royal) ➤ Circle, God
Authority and power in action ➤ Spiral
AUTHORITY

B

Badness ➤ Disorder
BEAUTY
Beginning of time ➤ Evolution, Spiral
Beginning ➤ Cause, Evolution, Spiral
Bereavement ➤ Immortality
Bewitchment ➤ Bond
BIRDS
BLESSING
Boastfulness ➤ Impurity
BOND
Border ➤ Frontier
Boy ➤ Man
Braid ➤ Bond
Bravery ➤ Courage
Brotherhood ➤ Family, Origin

C

Call for help ➤ Aid
Calm (for) unhappy women ➤ Marriage
CARDINAL POINTS
Care ➤ Healing
Carelessness ➤ Disorder
CARESS
Causality ➤ Cause
CAUSE
Cause of a beginning ➤ Primacy
Celestial matrix (the original mould) ➤ Circle, God
Celestial place ➤ Circle

Centre ➤ God, Cardinal Points
Change ➤ the Unknown, Transmutation
Changing ➤ Difference, the Unknown, Transmutation
Changing of residence ➤ Death
Charity ➤ Love, Goodness
Charter ➤ Alliance
Chief ➤ Circle, Human Being, Word
Child ➤ Man
CHOICE
CIRCLE
Circulation of energies ➤ Crossroads, Energies
CIRCUMCISION
Clairvoyance ➤ Circle
Coaxing ➤ Caress
Command (to) ➤ Authority
COMMITMENT
Common goal ➤ Union
Common origin ➤ Family, Origin, Country
Common sense ➤ God, Discernment, Equilibrium, Moderation, Stability
COMMUNICATION
Communion (of ideas, of sentiments) ➤ Agreement
Communion of beings ➤ Union
Compassion ➤ Goodness
Competence ➤ Dexterity
Completeness ➤ Circle, God, Word, Plenitude
Complexity of human relationships ➤ Human Relationships
COMPLEXITY
Complication ➤ Complexity
Comprehension ➤ Opening
Conception ➤ Fertility
Confidence ➤ Word, Secrecy
Confinement ➤ Bond
Conflict ➤ Hostility
Conformity ➤ Obedience
Confusion ➤ Disorder
Conjugal dispute ➤ Marriage
Conjugal life ➤ Marriage

Conjugal love ➤ Love, Star
Consciousness ➤ Maturity, Meditation
Consent ➤ Agreement, Alliance, Commitment
Consequence ➤ Cause
Consolation ➤ Goodness
Contact ➤ Communication, Relation
Contemplation ➤ Meditation
Continuity ➤ Spiral
Convening ➤ Appeal
Conviviality ➤ Welcome
COORDINATION
Cosmic crossroads ➤ Crossroads
COUNTRY
Couple ➤ Alliance, Commitment, Twin-ness, Marriage
Couple separating ➤ Marriage
Coupling ➤ Marriage
COURAGE
Covetousness ➤ Jealousy
CREATION
Creator ➤ Circle, God
Crossroads of the Last Judgement ➤ Crossroads
CROSSROADS
Crowd ➤ Quantity
CULTURE
CURSE
Custom(s) ➤ Culture

D

DAMAGE
Danger ➤ Evil, Illness
DAY/NIGHT (DUALITY)
DEATH
Death which gives life ➤ Death
Decision ➤ Crossroads
Decline ➤ Energies, Death

Defence ➤ Dexterity, Protection
Deficiency ➤ Alliance
Degeneration ➤ Death
Delegate ➤ Message
Delicacy ➤ Caress
Demarcation ➤ Frontier
DEPARTURE
Descendants ➤ Origin
Descending energy ➤ Energies
Desire ➤ Aspiration
DESTINY
Deterioration of things ➤ Death
Development ➤ Abundance
Divine power ➤ God
DEXTERITY
Dialogue ➤ Agreement
DIFFERENCE
Differentiation of people ➤ Circle
Difficulties of life ➤ Human Relationships
Difficulties of marriage ➤ Marriage
Diffusion ➤ Message
DIRECTION
DISAGREEMENT
Disappearance ➤ Death
Disapproval ➤ Disagreement
Disarray ➤ Disorder, Madness
DISCERNMENT
Discord ➤ Disorder, Fragility
Discretion ➤ the Unknown, Difference, Meditation, Secrecy
Disease ➤ Powerlessness, Illness
DISORDER
Dispersion ➤ Madness
Displacement ➤ Departure
Dispute ➤ Word
Disregard ➤ Alliance
Disarray ➤ Crossroads, Disorder, Madness
Dissatisfaction ➤ Aspiration

Dissension ➤ Disorder
Distribution ➤ Sharing
District ➤ Crossroads, Star, Country
Distrust ➤ Mistrust
Divergence ➤ Separation
Divine and mortal thought and reflection ➤ Circle
Divine breath ➤ God
Divine compassion ➤ Goodness
DIVINE GIFTS
Divine royalty ➤ Circle
Divorce ➤ Fragility, Marriage
Domination ➤ Bond
DOUBT
DOWNFALL
Dreams ➤ Word
DROUGHT
Duality ➤ Twin-ness, Day/Night
Duplicity ➤ Hypocrisy
Durability ➤ Immortality
Dynamism ➤ Evolution, Spiral

E

Earth ➤ Circle, World
Education ➤ Initiation
Elderly ➤ Man
Elegance ➤ Beauty
Enculturation ➤ Culture
Ending ➤ Death
Enmity ➤ Enemy, Hostility
ENEMY
ENERGIES
Energy (of the soul) ➤ Soul
Engagement ➤ Love
Entanglement ➤ Complexity

Entente ➤ Agreement
Entity (spiritual) ➤ Soul
Entrenchment ➤ Culture
Envoy ➤ Message
Envy ➤ Jealousy
Epidemic ➤ Illness
Equality ➤ Twin-ness
Equality before death ➤ Death
EQUILIBRIUM
Eternal renewal ➤ Immortality, Spiral
Eternity ➤ God
Ether ➤ Air
Ethnicity ➤ Circle
EVIL
EVOLUTION
Exercise authority (to) ➤ Authority
Exchange of energies ➤ Crossroads
Exclusion ➤ Fragility
Existence ➤ Creation
Expectation ➤ Hope
Extremity ➤ Frontier

F

FACILITY
Failure ➤ Downfall
Faith ➤ Trust in God
Fall ➤ Alliance
Family problems ➤ Marriage
FAMILY
Fate ➤ Destiny
Femininity ➤ Woman
Fertility (of soil) ➤ Ancestors, Fertility
FERTILITY
Fertilization (of the earth) ➤ Fertility
Fickleness ➤ Madness

Finishing ➤ Death
FIRE
Primordial Word ➤ Silver
First human being ➤ Ancestors
First men ➤ Ancestors
First roots ➤ Circle, God, Spiral
FISH
Flattery ➤ Caress
Fondling ➤ Caress
Folly ➤ Madness
Force ➤ Energies, Star, Human Being, Difference, Fortification, Illness, Union
Forget (to) ➤ Pardon
Forgiveness ➤ Pardon
FORTIFICATION
FOUNDATION
FRAGILITY
Fraternity ➤ Family, Origin
Friendship ➤ Agreement
FRONTIER
Fulfilment ➤ Agreement, Prayer, Initiation, Spiral
Fullness of being ➤ Knowledge
Future (the) ➤ Equilibrium

G

GENERATIONS
Generosity ➤ Love, Goodness
Gap ➤ Alliance
Gestation ➤ Fertility
Girl ➤ Woman
Give up (to) ➤ Illness
GOD
GOOD FORTUNE
Good health (to be in) ➤ Agreement
Good heart ➤ Goodness

GOODNESS
GRACE
Grand Lodge of the Assembly of Magicians ➤ Circle
GRATEFULNESS
Gratitude (to a deceased) ➤ Soul
Gratitude ➤ Gratefulness
Great knowledge ➤ Initiation
Group(s) (family, ethnicity) ➤ Circle
Growth ➤ Circle
Grudge ➤ Wickedness
Guarantee ➤ Commitment
Guide ➤ Circle

H

Happiness ➤ Good Fortune, Wealth, Health
HARMONY
Hate ➤ Enemy, Hostility, Wickedness
Healer ➤ Healing
Healing (process of) ➤ Facility
HEALING
HEALTH
Heart without love ➤ Wickedness
Heaven ➤ Sacred Place
Help ➤ Aid
HERITAGE
Hesitation ➤ Crossroads, Doubt
Hiding place ➤ Circle, Protection
Hierarchy ➤ Circle
HOPE
Hospitality ➤ Welcome
HOSTILITY
HUMAN BEING
HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS
HUMILITY
HYPOCRISY

I

IGNORANCE
ILLNESS
Immaturity ➤ Powerlessness
IMMORTALITY
Immutability ➤ Circle
Impotence ➤ Powerlessness
Imprisonment ➤ Bond
IMPURITY
Incapacity ➤ Powerlessness, Illness
Incomparable (the) ➤ God
Increase ➤ Abundance
Independence ➤ Liberty
Individual spiritual entity ➤ Soul, Ancestors
Individuality ➤ Private Property
Inequality ➤ Difference
Infinite (the) ➤ God, Immortality, Opening, Spiral, Transmutation
Initial dualism ➤ Aspiration
Initial source ➤ Circle, God, Spiral
Initial unity ➤ Love
Initiate ➤ Woman, Man
INITIATION
Inner need ➤ Aspiration
Inner peace ➤ Peace
Inner searching ➤ Maturity, Meditation.
Insanity ➤ Madness
INSECTS
Integration ➤ Initiation
Intelligence ➤ Circle, Knowledge, God, Discernment, Divine Gifts
Intercession ➤ Prayer
Intermediaries ➤ Ancestors, Mediation
Intermediary ➤ Mediation
Interrelationship ➤ Communication, Relation
Intersection ➤ Crossroads
Inventiveness ➤ Fertility

INVINCIBILITY
Invisible (the) ➤ God

J

JEALOUSY
Journey (of a soul) ➤ Soul
Joviality ➤ Beauty
Judgement ➤ Discernment

K

Key ➤ Opening
Kindness ➤ Agreement
Kingdom ➤ Country
Kinship ➤ Family, Origins
Knot ➤ Protection
KNOWLEDGE

L

Ladder of death ➤ Generations, Death
Ladder of generations ➤ Generations
Law ➤ Spiral
Leadership ➤ Authority
Liberation ➤ Liberty
LIBERTY
Lies ➤ Hypocrisy
Life (inner) ➤ Meditation
LIFE
Life cycle ➤ Crossroads, Cardinal points
Life force ➤ Energies, Fertility, Woman, Life, Vital Principle, Protection
Life line ➤ Spiral
Life's journey ➤ Cardinal Points

Light ➤ Circle, God
Limit ➤ Frontier
Lineage ➤ Origin
Listening ➤ Agreement, Opening
Longevity ➤ Immortality
Longing ➤ Aspiration
Lot of (a) ➤ Quantity
Love (conjugal) ➤ Love, Star
LOVE
Love between a man and a woman ➤ Love
Lucidity ➤ Circle, God, Discernment
Luck ➤ Blessing, Crossroads, Good Fortune, Divine Gifts, Health

M

MADNESS
Magic ➤ Crossroads
Male and female essence ➤ Love
Man (powerful) ➤ Human Being
MAN
Man with common sense ➤ Opening
Man's world ➤ Crossroads
Many ➤ Quantity
MARRIAGE
MASTERY
Maternity ➤ Direction, Fertility
MATURITY
MEDIATION
Mediator ➤ Mediation
MEDITATION
Meeting ➤ Crossroads
Membership ➤ Agreement
Mercy ➤ Pardon
MESSAGE
Messenger of death ➤ Death
Messenger(s) ➤ Ancestors, Message

Metamorphosis ➤ Circle, Transmutation
Migration ➤ Departure, Spiral
Milky Way ➤ Crossroads
MISTRUST
Misunderstanding ➤ Hostility
MODERATION
Modesty ➤ Humility
Moral force ➤ Courage
Mortality ➤ Death
Motion (to set in) ➤ Creation, Evolution, Spiral
Movement of life (cyclical) ➤ Energies, Evolution, Spiral
Movement of things (uninterrupted) ➤ Evolution
Movement before creation ➤ Creation
Movement of ancestors ➤ Ancestors
Movement of the soul ➤ Soul
Multiplication ➤ Circle, Abundance
Multitude ➤ Quantity
Mutual aid ➤ Union
Mystery ➤ Circle, God, the Unknown, Protection

N

Navel ➤ Opening
Newborn female ➤ Woman
Night ➤ Day/Night (duality)
Non-fulfilment ➤ Powerlessness
Notability ➤ Maturity
NOTHINGNESS
Number (large amount) ➤ Quantity
Number 1 ➤ Circle, God

O

OBEDIENCE
OFFERING

Omnipotence (of God) ➤ God
OPENING
Order (to) ➤ Authority
Order ➤ Circle, God, Harmony, Spiral
Organization ➤ Spiral
ORIGIN
Origin of all things ➤ Circle
Origin of knowing ➤ Cause
Original unity ➤ Love, Initiation, Union
Outline (first) ➤ Origin

P

Pact ➤ Alliance, Circle
PARDON
Parenthood ➤ Family
Parity ➤ Twin-ness
Passive force (feminine) ➤ Energies
PATH
Peace (inner) ➤ Peace
PEACE
Perfection ➤ Circle, Plenitude, Spiral
Perpetuity (of the human race) ➤ Immortality, Opening
Perseverance ➤ Courage
Pillar (of support, cooperation) ➤ Divine Gifts
Pity ➤ Goodness
Place (celestial) ➤ Sacred Place
Place (peaceful) ➤ Peace
Place where change occurs ➤ Crossroads
Pleiades (constellation) ➤ Circle
PLENITUDE
Point of intersection ➤ Crossroads
Political power ➤ Royalty, Liberty
Possession ➤ Bond
Potency ➤ Power
POWER

Powerful person ➤ Human Being
POWERLESSNESS
Praise ➤ Prayer
PRAYER
PRECARIOUSNESS (OF LIFE)
Precision ➤ Dexterity
Predicament ➤ Crossroads
Predictions (exact) ➤ Word
Pregnancy ➤ Fertility
Presence ➤ God, Stability
Pride ➤ Impurity
Priesthood ➤ Royalty
PRIMACY
Primitive union between male and female ➤ Love
Principle (feminine) ➤ Human Being, Woman, Initiation
Principle (masculine) ➤ Human Being, Man, Initiation
Prison ➤ Bond
PRIVATE PROPERTY
Procreation ➤ Divine Gifts, Fertility
Procreativeness ➤ Fertility
Productivity ➤ Fertility
PROGRESSION
Prohibition ➤ Protection
Prolificacy ➤ Fertility
Promotion ➤ Progression
Property ➤ Wealth
Prosperity ➤ Wealth
PROTECTION
Prudence ➤ Protection
PURIFICATION
Purity ➤ Goodness, Purification

Q

QUANTITY
Quarrel ➤ Hostility, Word
Quest (for knowledge) ➤ Knowledge, Opening
QUESTIONING

R

Rapidness ➤ Speed
RAIN
Realization ➤ Maturity
Reason (of all things) ➤ Cause, Origin
Receiving grace ➤ Prayer
Reciprocity ➤ Relation
Reconciliation ➤ Curse
Redemption ➤ Liberty
Reference ➤ Obedience
Reflection ➤ Meditation
Refuge ➤ Protection
Regression ➤ Spiral
RELATION
Relaxation ➤ Alliance
Remains ➤ Culture
Renewal (eternel) ➤ Immortality
Renewal ➤ Grace, Opening, Precariousness, Transmutation
Repentance ➤ Humility
Response (to an appeal) ➤ Appeal
Research ➤ Aspiration, Knowledge, Opening
Respect ➤ Obedience
Responsibility ➤ Authority
Result ➤ Cause
REVELATION
Ripening ➤ Maturity

Rising energy ➤ Energies, Vital Principle
ROCKS
Romantic liaison ➤ Love
Roots ➤ Culture, Stability
Route ➤ Path
ROYALTY

S

Sacrifice ➤ Offering
Sacredness ➤ Circle, God, the Unknown, Initiation
SACRED PLACE
Safety ➤ Liberty, Protection
Scepticism ➤ Doubt
Science ➤ Knowledge
SECRECY
Secret affair ➤ Complexity
Security ➤ Protection
Self-defence ➤ Protection
SEPARATION
Serenity ➤ Peace
Sexual organs (female) ➤ Woman,
SHARING
Shocked (psychic) ➤ Madness
Sickness ➤ Powerlessness, Illness
SILVER
Situation (critical) ➤ Questioning
Situation or problem (complex) ➤ Complexity
Skili ➤ Dexterity
Sky ➤ Sacred Place
SMALLNESS
Social life ➤ Human relationships
Social prestige ➤ Wealth
Soil ➤ World
Solidarity ➤ Union
Solitude ➤ Liberty

Sorting out ➤ Choice
Soul's journey ➤ Soul
SOUL
Source of life ➤ Woman
SPACE
Space ➤ World
Speech ➤ Word, Divine Gifts
SPEED
Spider ➤ Creation
SPIRAL
Spirit of the world ➤ Silver
Spirits ➤ Ancestors, Dexterity, Difference, Mediation
Spiritual and physical activities ➤ Activity
Spiritual entity ➤ Ancestors
STABILITY
Star of the universe (Serer) ➤ Star
STAR
Stratification (social) ➤ Difference
Strength ➤ Human Being
Stupidity ➤ Disorder, Madness
Submission ➤ Offering
SUCCESS
Suffering ➤ Evil, Illness
SUN
Superiority ➤ Alliance
Supplication ➤ Prayer
Support ➤ Aid, Culture, Stability
Supreme Being ➤ Circle, God
Suspicion ➤ Mistrust
SYMBOL
Sympathy ➤ Goodness

T

Teaching ➤ Initiation
Territory ➤ Star, Country

Thanks ➤ Gratefulness, Word
Thanksgiving ➤ Prayer
THINGS
THOUGHT
Threat ➤ Evil, Illness
To be at home ➤ Family, Origin, Country
To be in good health ➤ Agreement
Tolerance ➤ Liberty
Totality ➤ Circle, Plenitude
Tradition(s) ➤ Culture, Stability
Transformation ➤ Grace, Divine Gifts Transmutation
TRANSFORMATION OF BEING
Transmission ➤ Heritage
TRANSMUTATION
TRUST IN GOD
TRUTH
TWIN-NESS

U

Unbelieving ➤ Doubt
Equivocation ➤ Disagreement
Uncircumcised ➤ Impurity
Uninitiated ➤ Ignorance, Powerlessness
Union (primitive) between male and femal ➤ Love
UNION
Union of the number three and the number four ➤ Love
Unison ➤ Circle
Unity ➤ Circle, Communication, Union
Unity among men ➤ Union
Unity in hierarchy ➤ Circle, Communication
Universal crossroads ➤ Crossroads
Universe ➤ Circle, God, World
UNKNOWN (THE)
Uprightness ➤ Circle, Path, Dexterity

V

VARIETY
VEGETATION.
Vengeance ➤ Wickedness, Illness
Venus (star) ➤ Circle
Versatility ➤ Transformation of Being
VIBRATION
Village ➤ Crossroads
Virginity ➤ Marriage
Virility ➤ Circle, Energies, Man, Transmutation
Virtue ➤ Divine Gifts, Grace
Virtues of the ancestors ➤ Ancestors
Vital force ➤ Path, Vital Principle
VITAL PRINCIPLE
Voyage ➤ Departure

W

WANDERING
War ➤ Hostility
WATER
Weakness ➤ Energies, Fragility, Powerlessness, Illness
WEALTH
WELCOME
WICKEDNESS
Winds
Wisdom ➤ Discernment, God, Knowledge, Difference, Maturity, Mediation, Moderation, Protection, Heritage
Woman (pregnant) ➤ Fertility
WOMAN
Woman in menopause ➤ Woman
Word (The First) ➤ Circle, God
WORD
Work ➤ Difference, Divine Gifts

WORLD
World of darkness ➤ Circle
World of the Ancestors ➤ Ancestors, Fertility, Sacred Place
Young man ➤ Man

Y

Young girl ➤ Woman

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Origin, source

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CILTADE Archives and Research

- [ARTS] Arts
- [LING] Linguistics
- [LITOR] Oral Literature
- [SYCA] Signs and Symbols
- [TRAD] Traditions
- [ICON] Iconography
- [SON] Sound Recordings

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Tracing Memory

CLÉMENTINE M. FAÏK-NZUJI

This *Glossary* is intended as a contribution to the general understanding of signs and symbols. It is a systematic inventory of African graphic signs which provides the reader with an easily accessible means of gauging the creative force of analogy in thought and perception that they manifest. For the peoples who continue to use these sign-symbols, they represent a gift from God – tools to disclose hidden truths. This *Glossary* permits a more informed reading of these signs and it may also help to promote a new way of looking at Africa, its cultures and its spirituality.

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